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ROMANTIC  
ADVENTURE



# ROMANTIC ADVENTURE

*Being the Autobiography of*

ELINOR GLYN

1936

IVOR NICHOLSON AND WATSON  
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# ROMANTIC ADVENTURE

## CHAPTER I

### *Out of the Past*

THE principal interest in Memoirs has always seemed to me to lie in the comparisons which they make possible between the "then" and the "now", and the reflections which they provide of people, manners and customs which have passed away, or greatly changed with time. To read a book of reminiscences is like stepping back for a moment while painting some detail of a picture, to obtain an impression of the recent work in its relation to the whole.

My life has been so varied, and circumstances have thrown me into so many curious situations in so many different countries and societies, that I feel that some pictures of these people and events may provide an interesting comparison with modern days.

It is not easy to write memoirs for publication immediately. Pepys' diary is immortal because it was not intended for other eyes, and is a genuine, intimate chronicle of a very human personality in an important period of History. I have kept locked diaries for a great many years, in which I have tried to set down the unvarnished truth, in the hope that they may ultimately be of interest in this way, but I cannot publish these now, since many of the people referred to in them are still living.

This present book is an attempt to tell the story of my

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life, and to set out *truthfully*, as many of the events and impressions which are recorded in my diaries as can be published at the present time ; or perhaps I should say some of them, for it would need several volumes to tell them all.

On looking back at my life, I see that the dominant interest, in fact the fundamental impulse behind every action, has been the desire for *romance*.

I have sought it continuously, and have found it sometimes when it was least expected. Consciously and unconsciously, wisely sometimes and foolishly often, I have "followed the gleam", and having made certain that it is not a will o' the wisp I have tried to hand on my faith to others by means of my books and my films. Romance may be rare, but it is real, and it is the only thing worth having.

The word Romance has been narrowed and cheapened in modern times until it has come to be thought of little account, and for many it no longer represents the beautiful and inspiring ideal that it has always meant, and still means for me. As I see it, the word "romantic" represents the true opposite to the word "sordid"; romance is a spiritual disguise, created by the imagination, with which to envelop material happenings and desires, and thus bring them into greater harmony with the soul. It is the essence of chivalry, that is, of fine actions inspired by delicate sentiments which are not aroused by thoughts of personal gain, but rather by the impulse to render homage to another.

It is not merely concerned with the relationship between men and women, for it is present in the life of Galahad as in that of Lancelot. The essential element in romance is love, but it is love in the highest sense, in which it becomes selfless devotion to a spiritual ideal accompanied by disregard of material advantages, and not the debased form which is associated with the mere psychological emotion of the mating season.

This psychological emotion in itself—as distinct from lust—is far from base, and when it accompanies real love I

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believe it provides the most perfect expression of joy attainable on earth ; which is why the real spirit of romance must soon return, even to our modern, matter-of-fact, world—if indeed it has ever departed from it in reality. Fashions in ideas, as in customs, may come and go, but mankind cannot for long be turned aside by foolish cynicisms from the discovery of the perfect joy which is there for all to grasp.

However this may be, I know that the romantic aspect of events has always been that which has appealed to me, and no doubt this preference has coloured my selection of the facts chronicled in my diary, and hence in this book.

My memory goes back to my childhood in Canada in the 'seventies, but to make this intelligible I must give a description of my parents, and especially of my mother's parents, with whom we lived, and whose remarkable personalities stamped themselves upon my mind and moulded my whole outlook. I have an intense admiration for this gallant old pair of settlers, whose stern, disciplined lives were in reality the very essence of romance, and I feel that they deserve the first place in this record of the vital personalities I have known.

My grandfather, Colonel Thomas Saunders, was an Englishman, born in Paris at the end of the French Revolution in 1795. He was related to the family of Admiral Saunders, who helped to take Quebec. He was brought up chiefly in France, and married when quite young an Irish lady, daughter of Sir John Wilcocks of Dublin. The adventurous young couple went to India in the eighteen-twenties, but did not care for the life there, and returned to Paris. After the birth of one or two children, they emigrated to Canada, and took up a tract of land in Ontario, near Guelph, then, I suppose, no more than a cluster of shanties and a store. They were accompanied by a small group of other young couples, impoverished members of good families, in search of fortune in this new land. Two or three of these managed, like my

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grandparents, to make a success of things ; the rest sank into the soil and disappeared from view.

Grandpapa developed his land into an estate called Woodlands—now an Agricultural College I believe—and here my mother (now ninety-four) and several other children were born. The family eventually numbered nine, eight girls and a boy.

The strength, pride, and courage of this wonderful Irish lady must have been superb. The cold, the hardships, the impossibility of obtaining luxuries of any kind—nothing daunted Grandmamma. House servants were practically unobtainable, and elementary necessities of life such as soap and candles all had to be made at home. The physical stress of bearing and rearing a family under such conditions must have been overwhelming, yet through it all she retained her ideals undimmed, and by sheer strength of character she handed them on, little changed, first to one generation, and then to another ; while at the same time she loved and cared for and obeyed that valiant and domineering old pioneer, her husband, dying at last of grief after he was killed by a runaway horse in his eightieth year.

Her ideals were those of the French noblesse before the Revolution, tempered by strong religious beliefs, and shrewd common sense.

She felt herself to be a lady of good birth, and she believed that no misfortunes or shafts of fate should alter the standards of behaviour of gentlepeople. *Noblesse oblige* was the keynote of her life.

She determined that her children should be fitted to take their places in the world, if Providence should ever smile upon the family once more, and the opportunity occur for them to mix with the society in which she had been brought up. They must be educated and taught to maintain the standards of manners and morals to which she and Grandpapa had been accustomed in their youth ; and this in some incredible way she managed to achieve.

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An escaped darkie slave, who had been nurse to a rich household, was obtained to help to look after the growing family. Later a brilliant but decayed and somewhat drunken old scholar was captured and set to teach the girls English Grammar, Arithmetic, History and Literature, and the boy Latin and Greek. Another poverty-stricken Frenchman taught them French, music, dancing and deportment through the long weary hours of the Canadian winters. In summer all turned to work on the farm, and helped with the hay-making.

Grandpapa and Grandmamma dressed for dinner every night, after the working day was over, and sat stiffly upright in two curious old chairs on either side of the fireplace while one or other of the children read aloud such books as *The Lives of the Lord Chancellors of England* to correct their pronunciation! Grandpapa had fortunately brought with him from England a good if somewhat formidable library of books, from which the children's education was derived.

Once a year there was rejoicing, for the French relations used to send out from Paris a huge barrel—*le tonneau bienvenu* it was called—to the exiled family. It contained everything which these fashionable people felt that Grandmamma might lack in the Canadian wilds. Silk stockings, dainty Paris bonnets, dresses, satin slippers, wigs of hair dressed in the latest mode, as well as yards of stuffs, bonbons, books; even sets of false teeth were included, with kindly forethought!

Grandmamma believed that there were great differences between the upper and lower ranks of society, and although she did not despise the "lower" orders—far from it, she was their benevolent friend and supporter—yet she considered that God had decided to place them in a different sphere, in which they had not to shoulder those obligations and responsibilities which He had conferred upon the "upper" classes, and that although kindness and consideration must be shown them, there could be no mixing in a social way.

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To her children and grandchildren she taught that they must never demean their gentle blood, but must at all times show fortitude, courage, honour and cultivation, and must possess good manners and graceful deportment ; above all, they must never be arrogant. To be overbearing or ostentatious, she said, was the mark of the upstart. Good birth alone did not give rise to "good breeding", however, for those who gave bad examples and failed to maintain the standard required could no longer be considered gentle-people, even if the children of a duke ; the proof of the pudding was in the eating, and words and names were useless if actions did not bear them out.

Her religious beliefs tempered the natural worldliness of this otherwise purely eighteenth-century point of view ; she believed in marriages for love, not for convenience, and upheld the absolute sanctity of the marriage vows. Emotion of any kind, however, must never be shown in public. We have a daguerreotype of Grandmamma and my aunt Louisa in about 1857, dressed in garments straight from Paris ! Aunt Louisa, who was only sixteen, looks at least forty !

My mother, Elinor Saunders, was almost the youngest of the group of children, and had beautiful features and rich auburn hair. By the time she grew up, there were many visitors to Woodlands, and the girls were much sought after in the society of the neighbourhood which still consisted mainly of the old friends who had emigrated from England and France. Among them was a young Scotch civil engineer, Douglas Sutherland, with whom she fell in love at the age of sixteen—he was only twenty—and whom she was allowed to marry soon after her nineteenth birthday.

The romance was perfect while it lasted. According to my mother, who is my only source of information on the subject, my father appears to have been an Admirable Crichiton. He must have been a brilliant engineer, for he held responsible posts before he was twenty-five, yet he was apparently a poet and an artist as well, played the violin,

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spoke several languages, and above all was a dashing and romantic lover! I found in an old album of my mother's a poem which he wrote to her on her wedding day, and which seems to epitomize the masculine arrogance of attractive bridegrooms in those days. The distinction between "friends" and "brides" might have been penned by a husband in the time of Pericles, yet there is a Victorian sentiment about the verse which is rather delightful:

" Give me a *friend* within whose well poised mind  
Experience holds her seat ;  
But let my *Bride* be innocent as flowers that fragrance shed,  
Yet know not they are sweet."

After their marriage they went to live in New York, not long before the Civil War began.

My mother's descriptions of the charming American Society of those days are very interesting. Life in America was much more luxurious than in Canada, and she was greatly struck by the exquisite dresses of the women and the extreme politeness of the men. Both in New York, and when staying with Southern friends, she seems to have found just the same atmosphere of aristocratic exclusiveness as that in which she had been brought up. Her tales of Saratoga Springs, the fashionable Southern watering-place, with its armies of black servants, marvellous clothes and colossal trunks are most amusing.

Democratic ideas seem to have been purely academic in those days. Lincoln's famous definition of democracy was made at a time when the practice of it was all but unknown.

My parents were in New York when war was declared between North and South; the excitement, apparently, was immense, and the whispered question, " Which are you for? " was the cause of terrible heartburnings and tragedies. Their sympathies were so divided that my father decided to accept an appointment in Brazil, where he became the second

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engineer in charge of the engineering unit which was then engaged in the construction of one of the principal rail-ways.

Owing to the commandeering of all the steamboats by the Government, the only ship available to transport them to Rio was a 250-ton schooner, which took seven weeks to complete the journey! My poor mother was carried off the boat on arrival, reduced almost to a skeleton from continual sea-sickness and bad food.

The British Minister was then Mr. Christie, and Sir Edward Mallet, afterwards a well-known Ambassador, was First Secretary, while General Webb was the American representative—a delightful company it appears. My father was engaged in the actual supervision of the building work on the railway and was away in the wilds most of the time, leaving my mother with the Christies at the Legation. She still has a vivid recollection of her horror at seeing the slave ships coming into the harbour every month, filled to overflowing with miserable negroes captured by slave raiders and shipped from the West Coast. Her sympathy with the South died, and she longed for the North to succeed in putting an end to this abominable trade.

She was so much in love that she insisted upon accompanying her husband up to his work whenever this was possible. The hardships which she had to endure on these occasions were shocking, even for one brought up in the backwoods of Canada in the early days. She lived with him in a Portuguese shanty at the head of the railway, in constant terror of snakes, insects, and rats. There was no attempt at sanitation, water was precious, and the heat oppressive. She tells a story about one dreadful night, when the rats became so audacious that they ran up the posts of the elementary four-poster bed where she and her husband slept, and in order to keep them from falling on to them, he fastened the first thing he found, which happened to be her beautiful white silk wedding shawl, over the bed by way of a canopy.

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In the morning, they found the remnants of it in a corner ; it had been almost entirely eaten by the rats !

Another of her memories of this period is of the delight, on returning to the Legation, to receive from her sister Fanny, in a letter, a tissue-paper pattern of the new gored skirts, which had just arrived from Paris in the *tonneau bienvenu*. Up till then skirts had been as many yards round the top as the bottom, and had been merely "stroked" into a band at the waist. Crinolines had replaced the masses of starched petticoats (to be seen in pictures of the "Roaring 'forties") in 1854. The gored skirt was evidently an equally exciting innovation.

My parents came to Europe after the termination of the contract in Brazil, and my sister Lucy, afterwards Lady Duff Gordon, was born in London, and sixteen months afterwards I was born in Jersey, where my mother had gone to stay with a half-French aunt who was wintering there. My father was one of the engineers employed on the building of the Mont Cenis tunnel, and shortly after I was born he caught typhoid fever when working at Turin. In spite of my mother's devoted nursing, he died a few weeks later, leaving his lovely, heartbroken young widow and her two baby girls, utterly alone.

My father was the last descendant of the Lord Duffus who was attainted for following the Old Pretender, and he had cherished romantic notions of making a fortune from his engineering inventions and of reclaiming the title. His veneration for the past must have been almost as great as Grandmamma's, for his dying injunctions to my mother were that she should make every effort to bring up her children in England, and that they should be taught to remember their illustrious Scotch ancestors, and never to allow themselves to act unworthily of this noble blood ! Such ideas would be thought sheer snobbery to-day, but they were the cherished beliefs of many splendid people in those days, and helped them greatly to endure adversity with fortitude. His

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words had a profound effect on my poor young mother, already schooled to consider this the natural point of view, and led her, not many years afterwards, to sacrifice her whole life and happiness in order to obey his wish. Dying at twenty-six, the fortune had, alas! not yet been assembled, and the valuable engineering invention on which he relied to provide the means for his widow to obey his wishes was stolen by another engineer, who brought it out as his own, and kept the money for himself.

My mother had thus no alternative but to return to her parents, who by now had sold Woodlands, and had retired to spend their old age at a very pretty place called Summer Hill, near Guelph. I can see it now, a big white house with a Colonial verandah, standing amidst lovely trees.

Here we arrived one hot September day, my mother a tragic widow of only twenty-four, my sister, a pretty little thing of two, and I a precocious red-haired brat of ten months, already able to walk. My patent leather shoe of this date, just two inches long, is worn down at the heel by determined tramping on the deck of the steamer which brought us to Canada.



Mrs. Glyn's mother at the age of 90



## CHAPTER II

*Fairy Kingdoms*

THE years of my childhood, spent at Summer Hill, developed my character, moulded my tastes, and coloured my point of view for life. The outlook and the beliefs impressed upon me by my grandparents, already nearly a century out of date from the contemporary point of view, sank into my mind, and have never been entirely eliminated. They can be seen peeping out of every book I write, even when I fancy that I am being entirely modern. A varied life containing much disillusionment, and which has witnessed the passing of the last vestiges of the *ancien régime* that I was taught so greatly to admire, has not completely removed my childhood's faith in the value of the aristocratic tradition. Even my constant touch with, and ten years' residence in democratic, modern America has not undermined my subconscious belief, born of many fairy tales, that princes and princesses are the natural heroes and heroines of romantic adventures ! Nor yet, I hope, the accompanying doctrine of *noblesse oblige*, which is, as Grandmamma so plainly understood and taught, the inevitable philosophy and discipline of all true leadership.

It is in the elevation of all mankind to the rank of princes and princesses in a fairy kingdom, and not in the abolition of such romantic ideals, and the degradation of all classes to the level of the sordid, that I still see the future happiness of the world.

My aunt Henrietta, who remained unmarried, was my special affection. She was a deliciously romantic creature,

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who read me poetry to solace herself because she was suffering from a love affair which had not prospered. I had a remarkable memory, and if anything was read over to me twice, I could repeat it word for word. I soon knew most of "Guinevere" and "Elaine" and parts of many of Tennyson's other poems by heart, without understanding what they really meant. I wove fairy tales for myself about a blue Salvia Prince and a Fuchsia Princess, in the Conservatory which was my principal playground during the long cold winters. I lived in a fairy kingdom of my own, and fancied myself its Queen. I used to drape a tablecloth round my shoulders, and march about with measured tread, my head held high beneath an imaginary crown. I never wanted to play much with my cousins, my mother's brother's children, because they seemed so robust and noisy. My sister was their leader in every prank, but when I could not be with my mother or Aunt Henrietta, I wanted to be alone with the flowers. Even then I must have been an odd, vain, imaginative child, living in a dream world.

Grandmamma was never a playmate, of course, but a being to be feared, worshipped and adored from a distance. Every day my sister and I were ushered into her presence, and obliged to sit for five whole minutes without making a movement or sound of any sort, to teach us self-control! My sister, who was a natural rebel, hated Grandmamma and her rules and teachings. I loved her, and must have been in tune with her ideas, for they never irked me. My dramatic instinct responded to her demand for elaborate manners, aloofness, strict discipline, and righteous pride.

In one of my journals there are pages and pages about the life at Summer Hill; the etiquette, the manners and customs, even the papers on the walls are all described, and an exact picture drawn of the quaint, rather pathetic old aristocratic family transported into the Canadian wilds and bravely maintaining the ways of life which they believed essential. I saw little of any other life while I lived in Canada, as we

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were never allowed to leave the grounds of Summer Hill, until my mother married Mr. Kennedy.

My dear lovely mother was always gentle and sweet and sad throughout these early years. She never ceased to mourn for her husband, and even now, over half a century after his death, it is of him that she thinks, as she sits gazing into the fire. We learnt never to ask questions or to speak of our father, as reference to him caused outbursts of grief. I came to understand, later, how troubled she was at her failure to discover a way of carrying out his last wishes, and of bringing my sister and me to Europe to be educated. No possible means seemed at hand. She received several offers of marriage from eligible and kindly friends of her girlhood days, but she refused them all, unable to forget her romantic young lover and determined to take no step which would mean permanent settlement in Canada.

At last when I was about seven years old, a Mr. David Kennedy visited Summer Hill. He was a fairly well-to-do old bachelor, who had travelled much in the East, and had spent many years in China. He belonged to an old Scotch family, the Kennedys of Knocknawlin, and although over sixty was still handsome and debonair. His character, as we were soon to learn, was selfish and domineering to the point of cruelty, it was not unlike that depicted as Mr. Barrett in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street", but he was really in love with my mother, and these sides of his character did not appear at the beginning.

He soon began to pay attentions to her, and exercised a kind of fascination over her. Her feeling for him was never anything but one of rather exaggerated respect, and even before she consented to marry him it had grown to be something more like terror; but here was her only opportunity of carrying out her promise to my father, and her personal feelings were not allowed to stand in the way of obedience to his wishes and the furtherance, as she believed, of his children's welfare. She imagined that by marrying Mr. Kennedy she

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could assure for us a future in the old Scotch society in which it had been her husband's wish that we should be brought up.

So it came about that we said good-bye for ever to Grand-papa and Grandmamma, and the kind aunts and uncle of Summer Hill, and sailed away to Scotland.

My memories of the journey are still perfectly clear. I remember looking up at Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal, and wondering if I should ever see Notre Dame in Paris ; and I shall never forget the wonder of the Thousand Islands, at dawn, as we sailed down the St. Lawrence. The beauty of Nature has always affected me profoundly. We had a terrible crossing ; the sea looked like a range of green mountains, through the cabin porthole, and shut out all the sky at one moment, while at the next it had disappeared, and only dark grey scudding clouds were to be seen. I was never seasick, but I learnt to dislike and fear the sea.

My mother read us *Alice in Wonderland* during the journey. I remember resenting what I thought was an effort to poke fun at my beloved fairy stories. Such sacred subjects should not be treated lightly I believed ! My dignity was offended, and I refused to see any humour in it at all.

Next she read to us George Macdonald's *Princess and the Goblin*. This book provided a turning-point in my life, and influenced me more profoundly than any other which I have ever read. It aroused a sleeping interest in mystic things, and turned my religious ideas into these channels, and away from orthodox beliefs. The mysterious "Grandmother's lamp" became a reality for me, and the conception of a glowing, radiant, guiding light has ever since dominated my prayers. My sister and I had particularly disliked the clergyman who came to Summer Hill to teach us our catechism, and her rebellious spirit had infected me so far as he was concerned. I would not accept his dogmatic instruction, and being, I am afraid, rather anxious to pick holes in everything he taught, I became irreverent about all the tenets of

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orthodox Christianity, and my real capacity for worship was diverted into an exaggerated reverence for the eighteenth-century ideals of Grandmamma.

At the age of about six I had been overcome with terror upon hearing of the murder of a neighbour, Mr. Neave, by a darkie who worked on his estate. My sister and I overheard an Irish housemaid relating all the details to a friend, and both of us became afraid to venture into the woods between Summer Hill and Mr. Neave's property. About then I was also told about the execution of Marie Antoinette, and learnt how Grandpapa's family had taken refuge in Abbeville during the Revolution, to escape the guillotine. My imaginations after this had been full of fears, and I could not even bear to break off the head of a flower without shuddering at the thought of the way Marie Antoinette had died. After reading *The Princess and the Goblin*, however, I determined to be like the Princess, and not merely to control the outward show of fear, as Grandmamma would have taught me, but to refuse even to *feel* afraid. So strong is the power of childish vanity to dominate the will, that I was able to change from a timid, nervous child into rather a brave one, and to face several real dangers later on without alarm. In fact, it was not until I was shut up in a dug-out near the Front during the War that I again experienced the sense of sickening fear and horror that I remember enduring as a child.

We landed at Londonderry as the dawn broke and drove through unpaved, dirty streets to an unspeakable hotel. I can still see the dingy, marbled paper, hanging away from the wall in places, and remember my mother's disgust at the discovery of a bug crawling up the wall! We all knew what bugs looked like, because they had been the terror to be watched for and destroyed, each time new Irish servants arrived at Summer Hill!

The food was as good as the accommodation was bad, but I remember my sense of surprise at the constant demand for tips by porters and boys at the railway station. No one

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in Canada, at that date, would have expected a tip for anything. The spirit of the people was too proud and free.

My stepfather took us to visit his elder brother who was then living at Balgregan Castle, in the Mull of Galloway. It was dark when we arrived, and we were ushered by grand-looking footmen into a spacious beautiful room with shaded lamps, and filled with ladies and gentlemen in full evening dress. Mr. Peter Kennedy I remember particularly, for he wore a brown evening coat and a high stock collar. I had never seen such grandeur, and was immensely impressed. The big rooms, liveried footmen, and other attributes of Cinderella delighted me, and confirmed my belief in the reality of all fairy tales. The rooms at Balgregan henceforth provided the setting for my imaginary stories, and form the unconscious background for the country house in one of my books.

There were grand suites of bedrooms on the first floor, and quantities of unused garrets at the top, in the traditional manner of all proper fairy stories. One could easily picture it as the Castle in the tale of the Sleeping Beauty, or as the King's House where lived the old Princess in my beloved *Princess and the Goblin*. Balgregan had been the scene of some Jacobite plottings, and the whole place was filled with the romantic atmosphere of other days. My mother had told us that we were descended from a follower of the Pretender, and I loved to imagine stories of this exciting ancestor.

A good many guests were staying in the house for the shooting, and among them was a lovely Mrs. Bovill who had been the "Beauty" of that year's London season. She was so kind to the two little strange children, and used to let us come into her bedroom which was hung with cerise silk, and play with the fascinating things on her lace dressing-table. I was thrilled by her beautiful pink satin peignoir and quilted slippers, and longed most ardently to become a society lady just like her.

## *Fairy Kingdoms*

Long afterwards, Mrs. Culzean Kennedy told me what an excitement our advent had caused and how everyone had wondered what the "backwoods creature Uncle David had married" would turn out to be like, with her two unwanted children. It was thought that she must be a bold adventuress with uncouth manners, as it was believed that all people brought up in the Colonies must lack refinement. The astonishment produced by the arrival of my beautiful gentle mother, with her sad dignified ways and by the wonderfully good manners of her children was very great.

My memories of Balgregan are marred only by the unpleasantness of a horrible, grand, English nurse to whose care we were entrusted, but whose habit it was to shut us into a dark billiard-room while she entertained a good-looking young keeper who came frequently to the nursery "to set the mouse traps". It seems strange, on looking back, to think how often children were abandoned to the mercies of women of this type in those days, and what immense harm was done by them, as we learn now from the psychologists. My mother loved us so dearly that she gladly sacrificed her whole happiness for our sakes; we were her only solace, her constant thought and care. Yet she was so much in awe of this horrible stranger who called herself a nurse, that she gave us entirely into her charge, and allowed us to be seriously bullied by her without further inquiry. I am sure that this was true of most of the mothers of that date. They loved their children most devotedly, far more than the Edwardian mothers, a generation later, ever did. Yet they failed to protect them from the mental and even physical ill-treatment of low-class nurses and governesses, and often allowed them to be half-starved at school.

After leaving Balgregan we went to stay in Yorkshire, at another grand house, belonging to one of Mr. Kennedy's relations. While we were there he was taken ill with bronchitis, and was ordered to Jersey for the winter, as the mild air of the Island was supposed to work miracles for chest

## *Romantic Adventure*

complaints. As soon as he was well enough we set off, passing through London on our way.

My first glimpse of London was, I believe, the greatest disillusionment of my life. I had expected to find it the Mecca of my dreams, a town of stately palaces, and filled with delightful ladies like Mrs. Bovill. I had almost believed that the streets would be paved with gold, or at least with marble.

As we drove along the twisting lanes which led from King's Cross Station through St. Giles and Seven Dials, then the worst type of slum, to Waterloo, I gazed with sinking heart upon the dingy, narrow streets, the pitiful mean houses, and the rain. The pinched, pathetic faces of the ragged urchins who ran barefooted beside the cab, begging for pennies with which to get some food, seemed to destroy all my most cherished hopes. There was no room for poverty within my fairy world, and least of all within the precincts of the celestial city which I had imagined London to represent. I felt cold doubts spring up as to the reality of all my dreams, and I became silent and morose. The gulf which lies between the romantic and the sordid was never more clearly visible to me than on that day.

Contemplating for the first time the problem of poverty and evil, and utterly exhausted by the tiring journey, I arrived once more in the island of my birth. I felt like Eve, driven out of the Garden of Eden, and conceived a lasting hatred for the Angel with the Flaming Sword.

## CHAPTER III

*Childhood in Jersey*

JERSEY in the 'seventies was a quaintly pathetic place, the refuge of retired colonels, generals and admirals, who had families to bring up and very little money to do it on. There was practically no income-tax, and living was very cheap, so small pensions and allowances went further there than elsewhere. The society was far more up-to-date, too, than that in a country town, because the island boasted a Lieutenant-Governor and a regiment was always stationed there. In this military atmosphere, social etiquette was severe. Some of the old admirals and generals had had interesting careers, and the standard of manners and courtesy was out of the ordinary.

It seems strange, on looking back, to think how little the real Norman-French people of Jersey ever mixed with this society. Very few Jersey families, beyond the "Seigneurs" of Rozel and St. Ouen, were ever seen at Government House. They were a race completely apart, and spoke the queerest half-French tongue. They probably despised the English interlopers, while the latter, I am afraid, considered them to be uncultured aborigines in most cases, and little was known about the manners and customs of any but the lower class, who inter-married very much and were small, rather ugly people, shrewd over money matters but not otherwise very intelligent.

The cultivation of new potatoes was already one of the principal industries of the island, and the farmers cut down many trees round the fields so that they might avoid losing

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any of the early sunshine on their crops. Another curious industry was the production of walking-sticks from tall cabbage-stalks. These were polished, and sold to tourists at a handsome profit. Seaweed was also collected for use as manure and in the seaweed gathering season, troops of fisher-folk in their picturesque clothes would come over from Brittany to help the islanders with the harvest.

The lovely Jersey cows were never to be seen loose in the paddocks. They were always tethered, so that not a scrap of the grass should be wasted ! In such ways as these the people showed their thrift and intelligence. On the other hand, sanitation was quite unknown, and modern methods and standards were despised.

The market square at St. Helier was the social gathering-place, especially on Saturdays, when all found some excuse to go there and stroll about. The Jersey women wore pretty white caps with goffered frills and talked away in their queer mixed language. A cow was known as a *vague*, and a customer wishing to ask the price of a cabbage would say "*Combien est ce nice cabbage?*" Beautiful-looking butter was for sale on all the stalls, but it was not safe to buy it promiscuously, because it frequently tasted horrible. This was because the pans of rich cream were usually kept in the two cupboards at either side of the fireplace in the farmers' kitchens, or worse, in their bedrooms, and came to taste of the smell of these apartments, a queer mixture of onions, smoke, dirt and lack of ventilation. It was wise to know the house in which the butter was made before purchasing your supply !

The scenery of the island was most beautiful, with unexpected and interesting variations. The waves all round the coast are tremendous, and the sudden storms quite overpowering. The tides also rise higher, I believe, than anywhere else in the world, except in the Bay of Fundy. One of the sights of the place was the high spring tide at La Collette. I shall never forget seeing the awful mountains of water hurling themselves against the jagged rocks there.

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The vision of them comes back to me in nightmares even now.

Every year there seemed to be a wreck of some sort, and often soldiers used to be drowned crossing to Elizabeth Castle when the tide was coming in. The poor fellows would leave the shore on the great boulders which acted as stepping-stones, imagining the tide to be far out, but when half-way across would be surrounded and drowned by the rushing water. Tourists also used to be drowned sometimes, while exploring the interesting pools in the rocks in St. Clement's Bay. The sea would appear to be a mile away, but the treacherous tide would creep round them before they could believe it possible. I learnt to feel a fear and hatred for "dat 'ole debbil, the sea".

Mr. Kennedy found the island so beneficial to his bronchitis that he decided to settle there, and took a house called Richelieu, in a quarter known as Bagot, rather outside St. Helier on the road to St. Clements. It had been owned by a Captain Coombe, who had married one of the most interesting and intelligent of women. He was her fourth husband in the same regiment, starting with a private! The wit and good sense of this remarkable old lady, and her quaint sayings, amused me extremely. My mother thought her a person of real wisdom, perhaps because she used to prophesy that Lucy and I would succeed in life, and grow to be celebrated women. "Even if they haven't a bunch of keys to jingle on a tombstone!" I thought this such a funny simile.

The house was filled with good furniture, books, and some remarkably fine pictures. There was a beautiful Lawrence of Captain Coombe's grandmother at the end of the hall—she became one of my heroines—and an immense Gainsborough of a man on a rearing horse. A Lely lady in the drawing-room had a romantic air, and new food for my imagination was provided by a sixteenth-century Italian picture of Pan chasing Nymphs.

Kingsley's *Heroes* was given to me soon after we came to

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Richelieu, and awakened a passionate interest in Greek mythology and an admiration for the Greek ideals. There were translations of the Greek classics in the library, also, and before long I was poring over the fragments of Epicurus and Thucydides with the same zest that I had felt for the fairy tales of an earlier stage.

We had a succession of governesses in Jersey, and also masters who came twice a week to teach us music, drawing, and French, but I cannot remember learning anything of value from any of them, except perhaps from the French master, whom I liked. This was largely my own fault, and I realize now that I must have been an impossible child to deal with. I was too self-opinionated to imagine that stupid creatures, such as the governesses appeared to me to be, could have anything useful to teach, and I set myself against learning any of the ordinary subjects which they taught, such as arithmetic, geography, and *spelling*! This latter accomplishment I have never mastered, and my manuscripts are, I believe, perfectly incredible in this respect. My remarkably good memory enabled me to scrape through my lessons without attracting attention to my want of real study, for in those days subjects were taught almost entirely by means of memorized question and answer, as in the famous *Mangnall's Questions* which many still remember as the stumbling-block of their youth. I could be word-perfect in this way with a minimum of effort, but needless to say the whole subject had vanished from my ken within a few days!

With the aid of the library, however, I contrived to gain a peculiar sort of education of my own. Every book that was within reach—there were no library steps—I took out, and tried to read. Besides the translations of the Greek classics, which I loved, I found an unexpurgated, early edition of Pepys' Diary, *Don Quixote* in eighteenth-century French (all with long “s's”); Scott's novels; Agnes Strickland's *Queens of England* in quarto volumes (to my shame I remember painting some of the engravings); the French classics, Lady

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Blessington's novels, and the works of Byron; rather a strange collection for a little girl to study!

Pepys awakened great interest in the Charles II period, and strengthened my Stuart proclivities. I wrote under his picture, in a child's illustrated History of England which we had, the words "Dear Good King" and "Nasty old Beast!" under the portrait of Cromwell.

Our Governess, Miss Masters, knew so little French herself that she allowed us to read *Don Quixote* aloud, and also another rather ribald French book called *Jacques et Georgette ou les deux petits Montaignards*—both quite unsuitable for ten-year-old minds! Of course I did not understand a great part of what I read, but the whimsical, cynical views in these old books began to mould me in a new way.

The mood of rebellion in which I had landed on the island developed into an undercurrent of deep melancholy, hidden beneath what must have been a rather droll little exterior. I never ceased to mourn the loss of my romantic dream world, and although I accepted the fact that it was no more than a vision, I was still profoundly shocked by my disillusionment. Grandmamma's code of courageous common sense, however, demanded that one should adjust oneself to all realities, preserving a cheerful and witty outlook upon life in the face of adversity, and accepting the inevitable with calm. "If your hand has been cut off," she used to say, "it is drivelling and mawkish to meditate with regret upon each drop of blood"; and in my own childish way I tried to live up to her standards and to be outwardly gay.

It was impossible for me to live without a dream kingdom, but my new paradise was a much more realistic and worldly place than the old. It was no longer peopled with fairy princes and princesses, possessing every quality and virtue, but with the rather peculiar heroes and heroines of my remarkable collection of books. The Kings and especially the Queens of England were there, as described by Agnes Strickland, and some of Byron's characters; also, of course,

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the whole of the Gods and Goddesses and Heroes of Greek mythology ! There were one or two mediæval personages as well, and several Jacobites. The general atmosphere of this strange kingdom had acquired some of the cynicism of Cervantes and the sophisticated outlook of the French Court in the eighteenth century. Perfection was no longer expected, either of mortals or Gods.

The Greek translations in the library were my especial joy, and by the time I was twelve I was thoroughly saturated with the Greek point of view. I used to look up the stories of the Gods and Goddesses in the *Encyclopædia*, (an edition of the late eighteenth century), and I am afraid that the rather unsavoury tales which I found there encouraged the irreverent attitude towards all official deities, which had been started by the tactless Canadian clergyman. Gods and Goddesses, like earthly potentates, were faulty creatures, I decided, capable of mean, dishonourable actions far below the level of Grand-mamma's lofty code of behaviour, and were not, therefore, suitable objects of veneration, although it did not behove mere mortals to criticize their frailties. It was clearly unwise to arouse the wrath of these despicable but powerful beings, who seemed to possess such terrible and unexpected powers of retaliation upon erring humans.

My religious ideas at this time were not a little mixed. I believed absolutely in the reality of the Gods and Goddesses of ancient Greece, and in the existence of Pan and his nymphs. I became superstitious in little things, and terrified of storms, which seemed to me to represent the wrath of these totally unreasonable beings. I refused to accept the current doctrines of the Church of the Victorian Age, for they offended my childish sense of logic and truth ; they seemed hypocritical, and I resented the prohibitions and repressions which they imposed. My Irish blood was secretly in rebellion against the whole series of Lawgivers from Moses and Zeus to Queen Victoria, and my stepfather, Mr. Kennedy ! I conceived a hatred of Puritanism in all its forms, partly based no doubt

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on my Cavalier and Stuart predilections, but partly too because I felt that such an attitude was almost a blasphemy against the beauty and joy of my romantic dream world. My outlook was very much tinged with the ideas of the Renaissance period although I had read little about them at that time.

Instinctively I knew that above and beyond the range of Olympian and earthly deities who must be served and placated—but not necessarily respected—there existed a Supreme God, for whom real worship should be felt. I was distinctly hazy, however, as to the connection, if any, between this glorious Being and the real world, to which my family and my gods alike belonged, and in which suffering and folly seemed to reign, and I fear that I secretly thought that something had gone badly amiss. If not then, at least by a year or two later, I would have declared myself a complete heretic where orthodox Christianity was concerned ; and yet I am convinced, on looking back, that I never ceased to believe in the reality and love of Christ, for it was to Him that all my urgent prayers were addressed, as an incident which occurred soon after this unexpectedly proved.

I realize now how trying I must have been, and how badly I needed the insight and wise guidance for my unruly character which was not then attainable. The dominant, selfish ways of my stepfather had completely broken the spirit of my poor mother by this time, and her Victorian ideals of wifely duty led her to uphold him in all circumstances. She lectured us on the necessity of respecting our elders, who, we were told, must know best in everything. Rules had to be obeyed, lessons learnt and timetables observed, regardless of individual idiosyncrasies in those days ; and above all, the reasons for actions and decisions were never explained to children. Obedience must be blind and instantaneous, and feelings did not count one way or another. My rebellious tendencies naturally flourished under this regime, and gratitude and affection died away.

I had one friend, the little daughter of the Lieutenant-

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Governor, Ada Norcott. We spent several afternoons a week together, either at Government House or at our home. She naturally liked my sister much better than me, because she was so much more human and gay, but we were all very good friends. We invented all sorts of games and amusements, and made, I remember, a wonderful collection of paper dolls. I drew their faces, Ada cut them out, and Lucy painted their dresses in the very latest fashion, her marvellous taste for clothes showing even then. She played the piano very well too, but I was the despair of our music master, Mr. Stephens, who found me stupid and disobedient, for I always wanted to play by ear instead of reading the real notes. He became so impatient that one day he rapped my knuckles with a ruler. This enraged me to such a degree that from that moment I refused to touch the piano, and no punishments or persuasion altered this decision. I loved music, but my pride was offended, so I renounced the whole thing !

We had an interesting French master called Cappe—Monsieur Cappe of the soiled linen, ridiculous moustache and unspeakable scent of patchouli and stale tobacco ! He had some power of transmitting ideas, even though he could never succeed in teaching me grammar. “To write an essay, Mademoiselle, one must first have a subject—yes ? and one must set out the facts with distinction. Then one must sum up—but no more, you understand. The verdict must be with the reader, hein ?” He encouraged my literary tastes, and I wrote marvellous essays for him, although my spelling—either English or French—remained absolutely fantastic !

After about a year in Jersey we returned to England for a few months, and paid visits to others of the Kennedy relations.

In Yorkshire we had a terrifying experience while watching the arrival of the hounds at a local meet. The horses of our carriage took fright and bolted, while the coachman, beside whom I was sitting, dropped the reins and jumped from the box. My mother dragged me back into the carriage

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as the horses galloped madly on down the narrow twisting lane. I remember the feeling of the swaying carriage and the absolute helplessness with which we awaited the end. Then a horseman, in a scarlet coat, seemed to be racing beside us in the field beyond the ditch, and when he drew ahead of our terrified animals he suddenly jumped the hedge and appeared in front of them. I don't know how he managed to stop them ; it must have been a brave thing to do, for they were still galloping wildly, but he succeeded in turning them into a gateway and finally pulled them up without upsetting the carriage. He was certainly a very gallant gentleman, and I am sorry that I have never known his name.

I don't remember feeling afraid at the time of the accident, but it must have strengthened in me a subconscious fear of horses. This had already been aroused by the story of the tragic death of Grandpapa, who had been killed by a runaway horse not long before. Vanity has made me ride horses on various occasions since then, but I have never been able to overcome a feeling of fear and dislike for all large four-footed animals, and for all sports connected with them ! It is even a pain to me to watch polo for long, and some horrible accident always seems to take place when I am looking on.

We had another terrifying experience on returning to Jersey in a dreadful gale in the winter of 1875. The boat in which we were crossing struck the famous Casquet rocks, and for many hours it hung there, battered on every side by the huge waves, which seemed to tower over the poor little ship. Rockets were sent up, but as there was no wireless signalling in those days, we had no reason to be sure that our plight was known, and that our rescue would be attempted.

I can still picture in my mind that gloomy scene ; the dark and stormy sky, the cries of the seagulls as they circled above, and the thunder of the waves pounding mercilessly upon the slanting deck. My mother held us silently by the hand, too well-drilled by Grandmamma to show the slightest

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fear, although several of the other passengers were screaming. She whispered to us that we must not forget Grandmamma's teachings, and that this was an occasion for us to show that we understood them.

My sister, who was always naturally brave, was not a bit afraid, and I believe she even thought it all a great adventure ; but I was filled at first with a kind of superstitious terror. In my pagan imagination, storms and disasters signified the anger of the gods, and I did not believe that we should be saved.

As the long hours dragged on, we became stiff with cold, and fears increased as the hope of rescue was deferred. Under the strain of this prolonged test, one by one my acquired beliefs and superstitions departed. My pagan deities seemed to become unreal, and even Grandmamma was forgotten. I kept murmuring to myself my childhood's prayer, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child," and I felt strangely comforted by the thoughts which it inspired.

Presently a cheer broke out, as the tug which had been sent from Guernsey to look for our ship appeared, and battled towards us. Just as ominous creaks could be heard in the ship, which was beginning to break up under the strain of its long buffeting, the tug came alongside, and after some difficulty we were all taken off to safety.

C H A P T E R   I V

*Adolescence*

**W**HEN one winter my mother and Mr. Kennedy went to England on a visit my sister Lucy and I were sent to stay at Government House.

At that time we were enthusiastic about theatricals and got up many funny little musical pieces and charades. I felt greatly disappointed, I remember, because I was given only comic parts to play in which I had to wear a false nose, or sofa cushions to pad out my dress, on the grounds that no one with such a terrible disfigurement as red hair could ever take a leading part in a romantic story. The disgrace of having red hair in those days was very real, and there was no division of opinion about its demerits. My mother's friends used to pity her for having a daughter with such a severe handicap to her looks, and one lady even suggested that if she tried combing my flaming copper locks with a leaden comb it might darken them ! My mother, though conscious no doubt of her burden, refused to submit me to this ordeal ! Inwardly, I thought my hair was very pretty, when it was brushed out on Sundays over a black velveteen frock ; but I believed that I must be wrong as everyone else seemed to think it so very ugly, and admired my sister's golden brown curls and Ada's flaxen waves. It was a great comfort to me when Ada Lloyd, a Naval Captain's daughter, came and joined our little coterie, for her hair was red too, and she was equally despised for it. I remember my feeling of intense gratitude to dear old Sir William Norcott when, one day during his visit, he patted my head and told me never to

## *Romantic Adventure*

mind, as I might not be so ugly after all when I grew up, since I had dark eyelashes.

In the programme of one of our plays I had my name spelt Eleanor instead of Elinor because I was just then reading about Eleanor of Castile, and thought her a very romantic character. This annoyed my mother very much when she saw it, on her return, and she explained to me that it was very snobbish of me to alter the spelling of my name so as to resemble a queen. I was furious at this injustice, as I thought it, for I believed that it was not snobbishness at all that had prompted me to do it, but love of romance and hero-worship. On looking back I realize that the passionate interest in Kings and Queens which I derived from my extraordinary education must often have been thought of as an exhibition of snobbery, and so perhaps, in a sense, it was ; but not in the ordinary meaning of the word.

While we were still staying at Government House, the famous Mrs. Langtry came to Jersey to visit her father, Dean Le Breton. She came to dine with the Norcotts, and Ada and Lucy and I hid under the dressing-table in the room where she would have to leave her cloak, so as to get a glimpse of her. The table was covered with pink glazed calico, and hung with muslin, and greatly daring we cut three little peep-holes in the calico. One of us giggled with excitement at her arrival, and we were soon discovered, but she was kind and sweet, and merely laughed and pulled us out, promising not to give us away. Perhaps she felt flattered by so touching a proof of earnest admiration even from three unimportant little girls. I can see her now as she went down the stairs, her wonderfully blue eyes smiling as she kissed her hand to us. She wore a white corded silk dress, with a tight bodice and a puffed-up bustle at the back. The low neck was square-cut, with a stitched pleating round the edge, and her elbow-sleeves had lace frills. Her golden-brown hair was worn in a curled fringe in front like the Du Maurier drawings, and was tied at the back with a bright scarlet ribbon bow *en catogan*. She



Mrs. Langtry in about 1879

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was the first grown-up person we had ever seen who did not wear a chignon, but the mode of the catogans was short-lived, and soon after this she introduced the fashion of the Grecian knot which was so becoming to the late Victorian beauties.

Her kindness extended to a plea that we might be allowed to share some of the party dishes, and when the comic red-whiskered footman—his name was Simpson, I remember—was seen coming up the stairs with a dish of new peas and some spoons, we felt that our escapade had ended more fortunately than we deserved, though Ada's brother Gerald joined us at this stage, and ate most of the peas !

Lucy made a drawing of Mrs. Langtry next day, as she walked in the market with her admirer, Lord Slaine, dressed in black velvet and furs, and here is a picture of her which I drew a few years later, when she came back to Jersey again. Her reputation as a Society "Beauty" was waning by then, and there were rumours that she might go on the stage—a perfectly shocking idea in those hidebound times. To become a professional actress still entailed an entire loss of caste for any woman of good family. There were plenty of scandals whispered about the "Jersey Lily" by the time this drawing was made, including a suggestion that she had become attached to a semi-royal Prince, but my sister and I would never listen to anything but good of our heroine.

I remember an amusing story about Mrs. Langtry told me by a most delightful woman who lived near us, a Mrs. Hawksford. She had a lovely sense of humour, and a mind quite beyond that of the ordinary members of the conventional naval and military society of the island. Her house was the centre of what cultivation there was, and I loved to go there. Her appearance, however, was most comic, for she was very fat, with bulging eyes, like a frog's, and her friend Mrs. Pipon (of the family of the Seigneurs of Noirmount) was also as ugly as possible, with a rather red nose.

These two met in St. Helier in front of a tobacconist's

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shop in Halkett Place, in the window of which there was a mirror. Mrs. Langtry, who had, of course, been known to them since her childhood, had just begun to be the subject of gossip.

"Have you heard about Lily?" Mrs. Pipon whispered, and proceeded to recount the latest tit-bit.

"My dear, how dreadful—how *could* she!" Mrs. Hawksford agreed.

"Then," she said, telling the story, "I caught sight of our two faces in the mirror, and I felt obliged to reply to Mrs. Pipon.

"If you will look in that glass, my dear friend, I think that you will agree with me that we are neither of us in the position to judge of her temptations!"

Another of our neighbours at Richelieu was a Major Wardell, and we used often to go to his house for tea on Sundays. He had been one of the midshipmen on board the *Bellerophon*, in which Napoleon was brought from France after Waterloo, and we loved to get him to tell us about this tragic journey, describing how the Emperor had seemed very dejected, standing alone on the deck with his hand on his breast pocket, staring out to sea, just as he is shown in the famous picture.

It seems strange to think that one can live and move and have one's being in the comfortable, if amazing, modern world of 1935, and yet remember discussing the character of Napoleon with a man who had helped to guard him in his captivity. An even longer stretch of memory links me with my great-uncle, Major Wilcocks, Grandmamma's elder brother, who served as a captain under Wellington at Badajos. My mother has given me a silhouette of him wearing the incredibly high collar of the uniforms in those days. One wonders how it was physically possible for men to storm those fearful heights encased in such clothes.

Old Mrs. Coombe, the delightful owner of "Richelieu", had a daughter who had married the Seigneur of Longueville

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Manor, a lovely old place, about a mile away. The twelve Seigneuries of Jersey have existed since the Conquest, and some of them were, and perhaps still are, held by the families to which they were originally granted. The Lemprieres were at Rozel, and the de Carterets at St. Ouen's, but the La Cloches of Longueville had died out following a curse, in the middle of the seventeenth century. Mrs. Coombe used to relate the story in the most realistic way.

The Baillie La Cloche of those days, it appeared, had coveted a neighbour's land, and had plotted his death in order to obtain possession of it. He placed marked sheep in the man's Cotee, and then charged him with having stolen them. The poor "Naboth" was convicted and sentenced to the gallows, for sheep-stealing was punishable by death in those days. As he waited on the scaffold, he protested his innocence once again and finished by cursing La Cloche, declaring that he and everyone concerned in the plot and the false sentence would die before the end of the year, and that Longueville would never descend from father to son.

His prophecies came true. The Judge soon afterwards died in a fit, the Baillie's two sons were drowned crossing to France, and no one was left on the following New Year's Eve but the Seigneur La Cloche himself and his Intendant. They made a great feast to show that they were not afraid, but towards midnight the clattering of horses' hoofs was heard in the courtyard, and there came a rapping on the great door. Trembling, the Intendant went to open it, and found a very dark man on a black horse, from the nostrils of which poured flaming breath. He was leading another steed, and he demanded that the Seigneur La Cloche should come and ride with him.

La Cloche, who came to the door himself to see why his companion did not return to the banquet, was seized by the grim figure and made to mount and ride off with him, while the Intendant fell dead with fright.

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The queer part of the tale is that Longueville has never since descended from father to son, and seldom even in the same family. Mr. Venables, the husband of Mrs. Coombe's daughter, had bought the place from some people called Kipling. I have often wondered if they were members of the poet's family. Whoever the owner of the house may be, if he lies ill and is going to die, the clattering hoofs of horses are distinctly heard in the courtyard. When Mr. Venables lay dying everyone in the house heard the weird sounds.

In those days it was the fashion to relate ghost stories of this type, especially when sitting round the fire on a wintry night, but on no account must one appear to believe in them oneself; it was considered to be the prerogative of maid-servants to be alarmed by such nonsense. To-day, ghost stories are never told, but belief in the existence of disembodied spirits of every kind appears to be widespread amongst all classes, and superstitions are seldom defied by the younger generation. The "mascot" habit, no doubt exploited chiefly by those commercially interested, seems now to be as deeply ingrained amongst the inhabitants of Europe and America as it is amongst the most primitive people. We still pretend to deny the existence of "the supernatural" in any form, but at the same time we wish each other good luck, and affix a medallion of St. Christopher to all our cars!

I have never felt tempted to scoff at such stories as this one about Longueville Manor, or to adopt a superior attitude towards those relating unusual events, for I had myself an experience of this kind while I was still quite young.

I was staying in a beautiful old house in Hertfordshire which had been owned by one family ever since the time of Elizabeth. I had often been there before, for the girls of the family were among our closest friends, but on this occasion the old squire was taken ill during my visit, and after a week's illness was pronounced to be dying. His wife and a nurse watched by his bed and the land agent's wife sat with the three daughters in another room. I stayed up in the school-

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room with the governess. In the servants' hall, as I afterwards learned, two of the keepers and an old pensioner who greatly loved the squire were also keeping vigil, and no doubt several other servants were awake in different parts of the house, as we were all too worried to go to sleep.

It was a still November night, but at a quarter to one there suddenly arose a violent wind which rattled the windows, howled down the chimney and the last great gust of which nearly extinguished the lamp on the table by which we sat. An absolute stillness followed and the sound of the bell of the little church across the lawn could be heard quite distinctly. The governess turned white and seized my hand, and we listened intently. Twice more the bell tolled and then all was still again. At exactly the same hour the squire's wife, one of his daughters and the old retainer recognized the sound but no one else in the house heard anything at all. The old servant started up from his chair crying, "Squire's goin'—ther's the bell for the dead."

The master of the house, who proved to be the last of his line, actually died at a quarter to one the following night, and his wife asked the chaplain to make the fullest possible inquiry as to how the bell which five of us had heard so plainly came to be tolled at that hour the night before. He declared it to be quite impossible for anyone to have got into the church, as the only keys were in his own coat pocket in his bedroom at the time, and were always kept there.

I felt rather shaken by the experience, but thought no more of it until several years later, when two other curious events of the same sort occurred, and I became convinced that all three could not be explained away as mere hallucinations. Some reality undoubtedly exists behind the mass of strange stories of "supernatural" events which have been related since the beginning of history, but precisely what it is I doubt if this generation will ever know.

When I was fourteen, my sister, who could not get on with our stepfather, began to pay long visits to friends in

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England, and was away for the greater part of the next two years. The Norcotts also left Jersey then, and the children of the new Governor were too small to be companions for me. Mr. Kennedy's bronchitis had made him feeble and crotchety, and when one day in a fit of temper he dismissed the governess, my mother, who was by now a perfect slave to him, acquiesced in his proposal that she should not be replaced. My loneliness was therefore complete, and my official education came to an abrupt and premature end.

I had two consolations, however, first the companionship of my collie dog, Roy, who accompanied me on all my lonely walks, and second, and better still, a new set of books! This was because we moved from Richelieu to Colomberie, a funny old panelled stone house with a wonderful grape-house attached to it, and Mr. Kennedy sent for his books from Scotland. They were dumped into a small room on the ground floor as he was too ill to arrange them himself, and I shall never forget my joy on their arrival, for old-fashioned and unsuitable as they were for a girl of my age to read, they represented at least some variety, and food for the development of new ideas. For the two years which followed, I used to study these books every moment of the day that I could manage to be alone and often, by the light of a candle, far into the night.

Mr. Kennedy's library included complete sets of Dickens, and of Thackeray in the original editions, rebound during his stay in Pekin in old Chinese silk. There were eleven volumes of the *Memoirs of the Duc de St. Simon*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, which had bound with it, in the same wee volume, Voltaire's *Zadig*. These two, La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* and Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, became like Bibles to me. They were always beside my bed, and no doubt affected my adolescent point of view very much indeed. I loved *The Decline and Fall*, and St. Simon seemed to link up with my memories of Grandmamma's teaching. I grew to be posi-



Mrs. Glyn as a girl at 15, 16 and 17





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tively saturated with Bourbon Court History, and the atmosphere of ancient Rome which I absorbed from Gibbon superposed itself upon my old love of all things Greek, although the latter always remained my greatest interest. I used to draw dozens of Greek profiles on every bit of paper which I came across, and I thought seriously of trying to learn it. I decided against this, not out of laziness, but because I came to the conclusion that my main object, which was to learn the history, the politics, the wisdom and the stories of the old Greeks, could better be attained by studying good translations than by wasting time in mastering the language, especially without the help of a competent teacher. My only means of increasing my knowledge, beyond the subjects included in this old-fashioned collection of books, was to walk to the Public Library some miles away, and study the fairly recent Encyclopædia there, learning by heart the passages which interested me, as this was always quicker for me than to take written notes.

Those who have had all the advantages and facilities afforded by a modern education will hardly be able to realize the difficulty of attempting to educate oneself in this fantastic way, and with such limited material. Neither modern knowledge nor modern instruction were ever within my reach, and there was no influence in my life to counteract the depressing effect of reading so many cynical books at such an early age. The subtle philosophy of Sterne, the wit of Voltaire, the worldliness of La Rochefoucauld and Chesterfield and the lax gossip of St. Simon, coming on top of Cervantes and Thucydides played havoc with my original idealism, and I became a rather embittered little philosopher by the age of sixteen. Here is a photograph of me then, with a dreadfully serious expression. I grew to be gayer, later on, as these memoirs will show! In fact this picture marks the end of my rather sad adolescence, and the beginning of a more amusing life.

The change was wrought by the arrival in Jersey for the

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summer holidays of a delightful Eton boy, who came to stay with some relations who lived near to Colomberie. He was about eighteen, and very good-looking, or so I thought ! We soon got to know each other, and Roy ceased to be the only companion of my daily walks. He lent me his " cribs " and gave me sticks of raspberry jam nougat, which we sucked cheerfully as we discussed the classics ! It was my first experience of love-making, and even our innocent little escapades seemed very wonderful and exciting. Alas ! The holidays ended all too soon, and we said good-bye with tears. We met again some years later, after he had married a charming girl, and took up our friendship again on a different level.

This was my first, rather touching, little romance. I was too schooled in eighteenth-century cynicism to imagine myself broken-hearted after his departure, and I soon managed to get over the parting. He was by no means my ideal hero, in reality, and I had sense enough to know it ; but he had awakened in me the first dim understanding of what real love might mean. The star of Romance, which I have followed ever since, had appeared above my horizon, and its beams began to pierce through the foggy gloom produced by my peculiar education, reawakening my old, childish dreams and hopes of long ago. The obvious devotion of my schoolboy admirer had also done something to restore the self-confidence which had been shattered by the belief that red hair was an insuperable obstacle to beauty, and fatal to all chances of a successful marriage. This dawning hope that I might after all be less ugly than I had been led to believe was confirmed by two other incidents, and made a tremendous difference to my outlook on life. An old gentleman, a friend of my step-father's, who had been a Queen's Messenger, and had now retired and lived near to Colomberie, used to let me come and see him sometimes and browse in his library during my gawky days, although he was a cross old fellow as a rule, who did not even like the tradespeople to come to the house.

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He used to throw me a few gruff words at first, and later when I knew him better, and he realized that I was really trying to educate myself as best I could, he became interested in me, and would talk for quite a long while, sometimes, about the world, the flesh and the devil, all of which—or whom—he had encountered in his travels.

I used to ask him thousands of questions about the real Kings and Queens he had seen, for I still secretly cherished fairy-tale beliefs that Princes and Princesses were the natural heroes and heroines of all true romance. He replied that they were probably human beings if one only knew, but that they could not be expected to have really informed views since they could only peep out at life from behind their guarded windows. This information upset me dreadfully; in fact I have never been able to bring myself to believe it, and am still imbued with unconquerable faith in the divine right of kings!

After my little flirtation with the Eton boy I found a great change in the attitude of my queer old friend towards me. He urged me to come oftener, paid me compliments, and even on one occasion *admired my hair*, which was now twisted round my head in a thick plait ending in a small Grecian knot at the back. I began to realize that my presence affected him tremendously, that he wanted me to be near him, and altogether that our relations had become those between a man and a desirable young woman, and were no longer those between an impersonal teacher and his pupil or an old man and a child, as they had been before. The realization that I was, after all, attractive to men, even if only to an immature schoolboy and to this strange old recluse, was tremendously gratifying to me, and took away the shyness from which I had suffered as a result of the genuine sense of incurable inferiority produced by the contemptuous remarks of my girl friends and their mothers about my colouring.

Next came an altogether unforgettable experience. A dear old French lady, Mademoiselle Duret, who was staying

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in Jersey, invited me to accompany her to Paris when she returned, and my mother, deeply engaged in nursing old Mr. Kennedy, gladly allowed me to go.

Everything about Paris enchanted me. I felt as if I had returned to some place which I had known well long ago. We did a little sightseeing, but as my own French relations were all out of Paris at the moment I did not see them this time, and kind Mademoiselle Duret's friends seemed all rather old to my youthful ideas. But revelations were in store for me. Imagining, erroneously, that I did not know French well enough to understand the real story, she took me to see Sarah Bernhardt acting in "*Theodora*". I was tremendously stirred by what I saw and heard, and became quite intoxicated with her voice, her marvellous art, and with the realization of a new and undreamt of kind of love—a rather wicked, tigerish, variety.

When we returned to Mademoiselle Duret's flat, off the Boulevard Malesherbes, I felt that I was trembling all over. She thought that I had caught cold, and sent me to bed with some hot *tisanne*. I had no cold next day, and I think my trembling fit was the result of pure excitement. It was as though some unknown influence from some long-forgotten past was possessing me, and I felt myself filled with strange fierce emotions, quite foreign to my usual quiet, controlled character. When I was alone I re-enacted all of the scene between Theodora and Andreas, remembering the very words she had used after "*Andreas, je t'aime—*"

The love of Andreas and Theodora obsessed me throughout the remainder of my visit to Paris, and the effect of the play was heightened by another temporary love affair. A very handsome young Frenchman of good family had visited us in Jersey about a month before this, bringing an introduction from Mrs. Colzean Kennedy, and hearing that I was in Paris, he came to call at Mademoiselle Duret's flat bringing an invitation to pay a visit to his family. I was flattered by the attention and became attracted to him, turning him into

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Andreas in my imagination. Although I was of course never left alone with him, he nevertheless contrived to make passionate love to me in English, which Mademoiselle Duret did not understand very well. Fortunately my head was cool enough to control my new emotions, and I returned safely to Jersey having refused to fly with him, whither I know not! He gave me a new copy of La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*, to replace Mr. Kennedy's old one which was in tiny print. I have it still, a curious memento of a rather dangerous love affair for a young girl of only sixteen.

My passion for tiger skins dates from a visit to the " Jardin des Plantes " in company with this attractive young man. For although we could not get away from Mademoiselle Duret he kept whispering " Belle Tigresse " in my ear, and I was very thrilled.

C H A P T E R   V

*A Glimpse of the 'Eighties in England and France*

AFTER this visit to Paris, new vistas opened before me, and more ambitious ideas began to form in the back of my mind. Although I never had the same success as my sister in the Jersey society, I ceased to worry about my plain looks. Red hair and green eyes might be ugly, or they might not, but I was now certain that I was not unattractive to men. Like Becky Sharp, I determined that I would never stay where I was, or be content with an uneventful life. Cynical views were at a discount and I felt convinced that Fate had after all some good thing in store for me. My present experiences therefore seemed merely a more or less tedious preparation for this unknown but certainly interesting future, and meanwhile I wove endless romances in my imagination, and lived happily in a dream world which I believed would one day be real.

My sister returned to Jersey for a time, and we went out a good deal. All the young officers were in love with her, and she was very fond of one of them, a particularly nice man, whom my mother and I hoped that she would marry. Unfortunately they had a foolish quarrel, and she returned to England. She went to stay at an old house in Hertfordshire called Kingswalden, and there she met a Mr. James Wallace, a man of good Scottish family, but a well-known roué, twenty years older than herself, and not well-off. He was captivated by her youth and charm and asked her to

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marry him. Solely out of pique against the man she really loved, she agreed. I remember my mother's terrible distress when we heard the news. Everyone knew that the marriage could only end in failure ; but nothing would deter my headstrong sister, and she refused to give up the idea.

After the wedding, Lucy and her husband went to live in a quaint little house in the grounds of Cranford Park, near Hounslow, which belonged to Lord Fitzharding, a friend of James Wallace's father. I went to stay with them there, and found one of the kindest of friends in Lady Fitzharding. She was enormously fat, even larger than the famous Miss Helen Hennicker, whose waist used to be described as "twice round the Park". Funny stories were told of both these ladies, and when I looked at Lady Fitzharding I felt that they might well be true ! I had never seen anyone so fat except perhaps in a circus. Her size was accentuated by the contrast with her husband, who was a tiny little man. Both were adored by a host of friends.

Lady Fitzharding was goodness itself to me, and constantly invited me over to Cranford Park from my sister's house and I often stayed there and sometimes went to London with her as well. She used to amuse herself by making sketches of me, and especially of my hair. I was never sure whether this was because she admired it or because she thought it so odd, but I did not much mind, for I always enjoyed myself in her hospitable house, and was most grateful to her for giving me so much fun.

Lord Fitzharding had been in the Blues, and officers of the regiment used to come over in batches from Windsor, and numbers of people of the great world came down from London every Sunday as well. I remember particularly the lovely Lady Cardross, afterwards Lady Buchan, and also Miss Mimminy Wemyss, who married Lord Henry Grosvenor, and died very young. She had a lovely voice, and was especially kind to me. The old Duke of Beaufort and his handsome sons were often there, besides the famous red-nosed old

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Duchess of Montrose, and many other long-since dead celebrities of half a century ago.

The "Giant", as Lord Fitzharding was called, because of his diminutive size, was a most delightful man, who possessed that rare combination, a pretty wit and a heart of gold. He and his wife were a most devoted couple, in spite of their oddly assorted sizes, and she used to smile benignly as he poked fun at "Milady" as he called her, and never took offence at his jokes.

There was a most marvellous chef at Cranford, called François, who was no doubt partly responsible for Lady Fitzharding's increasing weight, for his cooking was irresistibly tempting. Finally he had to leave because he used two thousand eggs in a week, and "Damn it all, Milady," the Giant said, "that's too many!"

François's most famous dish was "Poulard Celestial", and this impressed me so much that I was able to describe it accurately enough, years afterwards, in my *Visits of Elizabeth* to enable Escouffier to imitate it perfectly at a celebration in honour of "Elizabeth" when the book came out. It certainly was "Celestial."

"The Giant" used to wear the most remarkable tall cap, covered with a hedgehog's skin and quills. I had a talent for painting little likenesses of people, not exactly caricatures, but I am afraid not always flattering, and I made several drawings of Lord Fitzharding in his cap. He was so delighted with them that he urged me to do similar ones of all his friends, and took me to Kempton and Sandown, so that I should see yet more people and be able to make pictures of them from memory. I did a great many sketches and it was his joy to show them to the guests who came down to Cranford. Some were really rather funny, and everybody laughed at them, but I dare say that my popularity was not increased by my artistic efforts! My mother still has many of the pictures which I drew of people in Jersey. I never heard what became of the Fitzharding collection.

## *A Glimpse of the 'Eighties in England and France*

Although I saw a great many interesting people during my time at Cranford, and while staying with other friends in England, I did not have any more romances for some time. None of the men whom I met seemed to me to be in the least attractive, whether they were handsome and charming but penniless, or peculiar, pompous, but highly eligible, and the exciting emotions of my "Andreas" adventure seemed to have died away. I say handsome or eligible deliberately, for there seemed to be a determination on the part of the Fates in those days, just as much as to-day, to prevent the appearance of a real Prince Charming. I had three rich admirers during my first two seasons, but oh ! how unattractive they all were ! The best of them was a rather bibulous peer, with a walrus moustache, who spluttered at me when he was proposing. I simply could not have faced living with anyone so physically unpleasing. Another was actually a Duke, and in those days to become a Duchess meant a great deal ; but I would rather have jumped into the sea than have married this particular one. He was absorbingly interested in the details of ecclesiastical apparel, and this subject was so far removed from my ideas as to the things which matter most in life, that I wonder that I appealed to him sufficiently for him to pay me such a compliment. My French cousins used to tease me, saying that, "Les yeux bleu vont aux cieux, mais les yeux verts vont à l'enfer ", and I can only imagine that my peculiar looks attracted him like forbidden fruit.

I have sometimes wondered what would have happened to me if I had married him. Should I have written books at all ? How would I have got through life ? I don't think that either of us would have had much chance of happiness, and I am glad that I refused him.

The third was a very rich man, really a millionaire I believe, and he had all the qualities and faults of his type, which were even more noticeable in those days of strict social etiquette than they would be to-day. Shades of Grandmamma were between us, and everything about him seemed to me

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quite impossible. Among other terrible drawbacks he had a beard! He asked my sister and her husband and me to come on his yacht for a trip in August, after the season was over, and we went. My brother-in-law did all he could to persuade me to accept this man's proposal, and when I refused him I was packed off to Jersey amidst a storm of curses for my obstinate folly.

On looking back I realize that from the worldly point of view it must have seemed very foolish to throw away such apparently good opportunities of marrying well, but I was too incurably romantic to accept anyone who did not attract me at all. My early romances had given me glimpses of what love might mean, and while I could help it I did not intend to throw away the substance of my dreams for what seemed to me to be the shadow of worldly position and money. In one of the cynical French books I had read I remembered the sentence, "It is better to marry the life you like, for after awhile the man doesn't matter." This seemed almost a blasphemy to me, for I was always instinctively a high-priestess of the God of Love, although thoroughly trained to the eighteenth-century creed (by no means abandoned by nineteenth-century society, as the Du Maurier and Dana Gibson drawings make clear) that the sole purpose of a young girl should be to make a rich alliance and that her success or failure as a woman depends upon this achievement. The effect of this teaching, drawn from the worldly-wise old books I had read, was not sufficient to do away with my desire for real romance, but it prevented me from encouraging myself to fall in love with any of the pleasant but penniless young men whom I was constantly meeting, many of whom seemed to be much attracted by me. I had no illusions about the joys of love in a cottage, and knew only too well the long struggle and misery of poverty. Mr. Kennedy's investments had not prospered in recent years, and the allowance which he made to my mother, out of which she paid everything for my sister and me, was pitifully

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small. If it had not been for Lucy's genius for making smart clothes appear out of nothing we could not possibly have gone about in the Cranford society as we did. Between us we made every one of the dresses we wore, even the tight supposedly tailor-made garments of those days ; and very chic we looked !

Since the dream-lover did not seem to be forthcoming in England, and remembering the passionate love-making of my French "Andreas", I wondered if I should not be more likely to find him in France, and I gladly accepted an invitation to spend the following seasons with my French cousins, the Fouquet Lemaîtres, who had, and still have, a lovely place in Normandy, La Valasse, near Bolbec, and a Paris house at 131 Avenue des Champs Elysées, now pulled down.

I did not realize until later that a girl may appear to have the greatest success in French society, and may seemingly break the hearts of all the charming and eligible young men, but she will never receive a serious offer of marriage unless she has a substantial dowry. My three poor elderly and unattractive English admirers showed that they possessed a more fundamental spirit of chivalry and romance when they offered to share their wealth and titles with a penniless, unknown girl, than all the attractive young Frenchmen whom I met in my gay seasons in Paris, none of whom paid me this truest of all compliments ; but I did not appreciate this for some time.

All the people to whom I was introduced in France were more than charming to me. Apparently my odd looks were not so despised over there. Red hair was thought to be a misfortune of course, but I was told that Fate had not otherwise been too unkind to "La Petite Elinor", who had something of Sarah Bernhardt about her eyes !

My strange education stood me in good stead in the very cultivated *milieu* of my French cousins, for my knowledge of French, and odd familiarity with History and the French classics was much appreciated, and I was thought wonderfully

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well brought-up. The eldest children of the Fouquet Lemaîtres were married, and one of them had a chateau near Villiers, where lived the Comte, afterwards Marquis de Ségar, the famous Academicien, and one of the most charming men whom I have ever met. He possessed that peculiar subtle wit which only France can produce, and at Villiers I used to meet the most delightful and entertaining company possible. I described the whole circle of them in my *Visits of Elizabeth*. The yacht, *Hypolite*, the Baronne (the Comtesse de Ségar's mother), in fact all the French part of the book is taken directly from my journal of this period.

I shall never forget that delightful trip which we went down the Seine, and the other amusing parties to which I was taken. I had already a deep admiration for everything French, and I felt really more at ease in France than in England for all these people were so very kind to me. They laughed at, but secretly sympathized with my royalist ideals, about which I was quaintly outspoken it seems. We went on a picnic to Versailles one day, I remember, and the Comte de Ségar was anxious to show me his ancestor among the portraits of Napoléon's Generals; he laughed heartily when I told him that I was not interested in "cette canaille là!" I honestly believed that neither Napoleon nor his Generals were worth looking at! "Petite Royaliste—Va!" he said, but it amused him to hear me.

All Grandmamma's teachings were understood and appreciated by these courteous, old-fashioned people, the nineteenth-century representatives of all that was best in the Ancien Régime.

I remember an interesting story told me by the Duc de Luynes.

A forebear of his, during the Terror, had been in the prison of the Madelonnettes together with the old Duchesse de Maillé, and several other aristocratic prisoners. To while away the time, the company in the prison played cards every evening seated round a barrel which served for a table, and

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was lit by four tallow candles stuck in bottles. The Duchesse had a footman named Joseph, who had been arrested with her, and it was his duty to snuff the candles when they showed signs of guttering.

All the members of the party were elegant cynics, and the problem of survival after death was often discussed by them quite dispassionately as they awaited the day appointed for their execution. One by one they were taken away, until the guillotine had claimed all but the ancestor of the Duc de Luynes, the old Duchesse and another. To make a fourth for their game, they took in the footman, and discussed, as usual, the prospects of an after life, ignoring his presence. The Duchesse suggested that, in order to settle the matter, whichever of them should be taken the next morning should, if there were indeed a life beyond, return the next night and give, if possible, some sign to those who remained.

Only the footman went to the guillotine on the following morning, and the party having dwindled to three, they played their game with a dummy hand. The candles guttered in an unusual gust of wind as they dealt the last round of cards, and all three looked up to see the wicks being snuffed by a pair of snuffers held by an unseen hand. "Ah, ce bon Joseph!" exclaimed the old Duchesse, greatly reassured.

She and the Luynes ancestor went to the scaffold next day, but the third man escaped, and transmitted the story.

The then Duchesse de Luynes and her daughter were imprisoned in a different prison. They used to practise on two old boxes, so as to discover how best to mount the steep steps of the scaffold with dignity, when the time came. As it happened, they were saved, because they had been so kind to their people at Dampierre that the peasants used to bring up to Paris every week chickens and vegetables and eggs for them to eat in prison. The jailer, of course, appropriated these, but fearing that if the ladies were guillotined the supply would cease, he always altered their names from the

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top to the bottom of the list. Before they could be summoned, the events of the 9th Thermidor had opened the doors of the prisons, and the Duchesse and her daughter were set free. And so the merciful obtained mercy, even in the eighteenth century.

After all these years I look back with affection and gratitude to those charming French people, and remember their wonderful wit and learning. In those days wit was used only to enliven conversation, never to scathe and hurt, which would have been thought bad manners.

My eldest cousin had married a charming woman who was extremely kind to me. She took me about with her, and often gave me lovely presents to make up my scanty wardrobe. I went everywhere and met everyone, in the gay Paris of the late 'eighties and in 1890 and '91.

The Vicomte Léon de Ianze, a friend of my family's, used to be particularly kind to me, giving me heaps of favours at the Cotillons which he led. He was the most well-loved man of his time, and very good looking. He had a club at Puteaux where we played tennis. The etiquette concerning girls was so fearfully stiff, that none of us was ever left alone for a moment with a young man ; we were expected to return to our chaperones immediately after each dance, or to stand at the buffet, pretending that we wanted some lemonade ; but at Puteaux it was just possible to wander a few steps among the trees, and the Club was very popular in consequence !

There were two great beauties in Paris then, a Danish Countess Raben, and Lady Claud Hamilton, née Chandos-Pole. Madame Jules Porges was also very beautiful, and had a splendid house in the Avenue Montaigne. She so much resembled the portraits of Marie Antoinette that it was said that she must be a Hapsburg.

The First Secretary at our Embassy was one of the kindest of men, Sir Condie Stephen, and he, and Lord Claud Hamilton, used to say they must look after their little countrywoman and not let her get into mischief. They used to give me good

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advice—oh! very good! and shepherd me when I went to official parties. I remember one night especially, going to a Ball at the American Embassy (Mr. Whitelaw Reid was Ambassador then) in a new white tulle ball dress which my cousin had given me. I was feeling very excited because the celebrated hairdresser, Marcel, who invented the Marcel wave, had kept two well-known ladies waiting that afternoon because he had so greatly admired my hair that he had insisted on doing it himself, in order, as he said, that he might have the pleasure of handling such a strange mop of fine spun copper. This compliment to my despised “carrots” had cheered me beyond words, and had given me such self-confidence that I think I was really as gay as Cinderella at the Prince’s Ball. It seemed as if I were besieged by every man in the room, and—well!—perhaps it was a good thing that I had so many kind friends to look after me.

But alas! Prince Charming still failed to appear.

Opposite to me in the cotillon, I remember, was the beautiful Mary Leiter, afterwards Lady Curzon. Her Aphrodite type was a great joy to my Greek-loving eye.

Mrs. Paran Stephens (Lady (Arthur) Paget’s mother) was another friend who showed me great kindness. She used to take me on the Seine in Mr. Gordon Bennett’s yacht. One day I happened to remark to my host that the wave made by the yacht caused a big wash against the shore as we moved along.

“We’ll go full steam ahead then,” he replied. “It’s great, it sweeps the washerwomen into the water, and how they yell! It cost me ten thousand francs last time, but it’s worth it!” I implored him to refrain, feeling a good deal of sympathy for the poor washer-ladies. Mr. Gordon Bennett was a very strange man, with the bluest china eyes I have ever seen, and a total disregard of the cost of obtaining what he happened to want.

One of the things I did in those days and which I thought very smart, was to ride my cousins’ polo-ponies in the Bois

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in a perfect English habit which I had saved up to buy, and a tall hat, which was still rare in France in those days. The French women had only lately emerged from habits of voluminous blue cloth, fastened at the neck by a gold brooch, like the pictures of Queen Victoria riding with Prince Albert, and none had a well-fitting habit like mine. I was terrified of horses, and no doubt a shocking rider, but my figure was considered wonderful! I was very slim naturally and had such small bones that I could easily achieve an eighteen-inch waist, which was the envy of my friends, and the cause of much admiration amongst the smart young Frenchmen who were my "cavaliers" as we ambled along to the Potinière. I still have that habit coat and look at it sometimes with wonder. Neither my daughters nor my granddaughter could get it on after they were seven years old, yet I wore it until I was married.

I will tell of my marriage in the next chapter. But before leaving Paris I want to give a picture of the standards of so-called morals, and of the general point of view of those days, or at any rate of as much of them as could be understood or guessed by a strictly-chaperoned *jeune fille*.

Nearly every married woman in the "chic" society of Paris had a lover, but the greatest care was taken to avoid advertising the fact. The pair whom everyone knew were *amants* did not go about together. They were not continually asked to the same houses at the same time, nor put next each other at every dinner, as in England. When they wanted to meet, the lady went to have "five o'clock" at the man's *garconnière*, which was, if possible, situated in some convenient quarter near to her dressmaker or dentist.

There was an unwritten law that ladies should not take money or jewels from their lovers—"Ca jamais!" If they should be so vulgar as to do this, then it was agreed that the lover had a perfect right to be unfaithful if he felt inclined, and the lady would no longer be "considered" in society if it were known. If there was no traffic of money, then the

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affairs lasted perhaps for several years, and in some cases, as in the eighteenth century, even into old age.

Above all there must be no scandal. Things must be done in such a way that the husband could retain his public honour, and no family difficulties must arise. The practical common sense of the French character argued that since religious influence through the centuries had been unable to curb the deplorable fickleness of mankind, at least good manners in good society should try to hide the evidence of straying fancy. Public opinion concentrated on the importance of family unity and of maintaining a good public example whatever the real facts might be. Human failings were recognized, and perhaps even condoned, but a system had been developed which successfully cloaked any shortcomings, and kept up an appearance of strict morality.

Amongst the *jeunes-filles* scandals were absolutely unknown. It was not even necessary for public opinion to condemn them ; they simply did not arise. For one thing opportunity did not occur, for the system of chaperonage was completely effective ; for another thing no decent man considered a young girl fair game, and efforts at love-making with girls were very rare.

Mademoiselle Jeanne de Fougère and I seemed to be the only girls who ever had a good time, perhaps because, as we had no dowry, we were not considered marriageable. Oddly enough we both married Englishmen, she a Mr. Clayton and I Clayton Glyn.

I finish this chapter with the words "Good-bye dear France." I have spent many months and even years there since those happy days of forty years ago, but the joyous, witty, friendly Paris that I knew has vanished into the realm of dreams.

C H A P T E R   V I

*Marriage, 1892*

MY stepfather died in 1889 and we left Jersey and came to live in London, in Davies' Street, just out of Berkeley Square. My poor mother, released at last from her years of slavery to the terrible selfishness of Mr. Kennedy, was now faced with a new trouble, being greatly distressed over my sister's unhappiness with her husband, whose failing for drink had by now reached a ghastly stage. An adorable little daughter had been born to them, Esmé Wallace (now Lady Halsbury), and my mother took principal charge of the child. In the end divorce became inevitable, but to obtain this was in those days an expensive matter, and a large part of the little fortune which Mr. Kennedy had left was given up by my mother to pay the costs of the divorce.

After it was over, my sister found herself all but penniless, and with a child to provide for. With wonderful courage she set herself to build up a dressmaking business, "Lucile Ltd.", which was financed once again by our devoted mother, who used actually to cut out and help to sew the dresses herself in the early days.

These troubles spelt poverty for us all, and I began to wonder whether I was not playing a selfish part in refusing to marry any one of the fairly large number of suitors who presented themselves each time that I returned to England, in between my seasons in Paris. I suppose that my life in France had given me rather an un-English appearance and that my looks were improving; but whatever it was, I

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became a sort of storm centre wherever I went, and there are still old people in Devonshire, for instance, who can remember a wildly exciting incident after the Walron Coming-of-Age ball at Bradfield, when four responsible Englishmen (perhaps not quite sober at that hour of the November morning!) jumped into the lake at Hillersdon where we were all staying, in their full evening clothes, after quarrelling over me, and then came back to the house and had baths in our host's best champagne! The host in question was my very dear old friend Billy—or “W. J. A.” Grant—as his obituary notices recently described him, the Arctic explorer, and one of the most gallant, the most kind, and the most whimsically charming of eccentric Englishmen. After a life of unending adventures closed by several years of agonizing illness, heroically endured, his doctors finally told him last year that he had not much longer to live. Delighted at the thought of moving on to yet another Undiscovered Country, he immediately made arrangement to give a large Ball, to which I was invited, and went down to Exeter to attend. His “Swan Ball” he called it, instead of his Swan song. We had a merry and delightful evening, dancing and listening to Billy’s dryly humorous stories. A few months before he died, after entertaining a large party to lunch at Lords for the Eton and Harrow, he had a serious accident, a celluloid eye shade which he was wearing catching fire from his pipe, and blinding him as well as burning away the thick black hair which was still his at eighty years old. I went to see him, swathed in bandages, and not expected by the staff of the nursing home where he was taken to survive many days. I found him as usual full of droll tales and perfectly cheerful. “They tell me I’m goin’ to die,” he said. “Ought to have been dead long ago, and only keepin’ goin’ to annoy my doctor. So I’ve been trying to settle up everything in a tidy way. I’ve ordered my tombstone and settled the price (beat the man down a bit), and I’ve chosen the hymns for the funeral and who’s to be asked, and told

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everybody to wear their new clothes and look cheerful. Never do to have a fuss after I'm gone and no one there to see about things.

"I've been thinkin' about sayin' prayers too—a dyin' man ought to say prayers I s'pose—and after a bit I started off with the Lord's Prayer, because I thought that one must be all right. Well I got on pretty well until I came to the bit, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us', and then I was badly stumped. Seemed as though I wasn't going to get my trespasses forgiven—and there's plenty of 'em of course—because I couldn't think of anybody that's ever trespassed against me so that I could do some forgiving, don't you see—not one!"

The text which he had chosen to be engraved upon his headstone was "O Death, where is thy sting, where grave thy victory?"

Where indeed, for such as he.

The fame of the lake episode in Devonshire following the ball at Bradfield reached as far as Essex, where live some dear friends of mine, the Chisenhale-Marshes, at Gaynes Park in Epping Forest. A neighbour of theirs, Clayton Glyn, of Durrington House, Harlow, an eligible bachelor who had successfully resisted matrimony for twenty years, heard the story from them, and made up his mind on the spot (or so he used to tell me afterwards) that he would marry no one but the heroine of so exciting a tale. "A woman who could induce solid old A. B.—and B. C.—to jump into a lake at three o'clock on a winter morning must be worth looking at," he told my friends, and so it was arranged that I should be asked to Gaynes Park to meet him.

I was told this story of my fellow-guest on my arrival, and immediately I felt thrilled. Here was romance as I had imagined it.

Evidently my looks did not disappoint, for Clayton lost no time at all in making it plain to me that he intended to



Clayton Glyn at Cowes

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marry me. I say intended on purpose. It was part of his charm for me that he was never in the least doubt, apparently, that I would accept him. The affair had the inevitability of Fate from the very start. He never made love to me in words, as "Andreas", and dozens of others since had done; that was not his way. He detested fuss or show of sentiment, and always hid his real feelings behind a mask of cheerful humour. I missed the romantic love-making that I had dreamed of, but I was very much attracted by his merry blue eyes and perfect teeth, and by his quaintly arrogant point of view about everything. Here is a photograph of him at Cowes.

Although sorrow and even tragedy have intervened since those days, I like to remember that in his ways and thoughts he was always instinctively and naturally the most perfect *Grand Seigneur*, that I have ever met, and one of the kindest of men, generous in everything and incapable of meanness of any kind. He was a splendid shot, a great traveller, and a *bon-viveur*, known and beloved by every *maitre d'hôtel* in Europe, and by many in Asia as well. He had a broad, tolerant, kindly outlook, and a wonderfully sound judgment about all matters unconnected with money. Tall and broad-shouldered, he had not yet become stout as he did in later years; he had an arrestingly dignified carriage, and this effect was heightened by his thick, silver hair which waved away from a peak in the middle of his forehead. His head had been badly burnt in a gas explosion while he was still at his private school, and the hair which had been brown had grown in again almost white. The effect was very remarkable, and revolutionized my ideas about the looks of the man I should want to marry.

I believe that one reason why I felt so attracted by him was because I was unconsciously reminded of the illustrations in my books of Cinderella's fairy Prince, for his thick grey hair was like the powdered wigs of the eighteenth century, to which the story of Cinderella always seems to belong. One

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would never imagine that white hair would be an attraction, but in Clayton's case it really seemed so to me.

I caught influenza soon after the Gaynes Park visit, and Clayton persuaded my mother, who adored him from the very first meeting, to take me to Monte Carlo to convalesce. He followed, of course, and there we became engaged in the February of 1892. He insisted that the wedding should take place immediately after Easter, which was late that year, and April 27 was chosen.

As soon as he was sure that everything was settled about the wedding, this strange man, who had just given me the most tangible proof of his love in the form of a splendid diamond engagement ring, announced that he must return to England "and see how the young pheasants were doing"! He left and I saw little more of him before the wedding. But for the ring I should have imagined that I had dreamt the whole incident, for he seldom wrote.

My mother and I went on to Paris to see our relations, and to get part of my trousseau. The bulk of it, including the wedding dress and the bridesmaids' clothes, was to be made at "Lucile's" of course, and this was the first big wedding order that my sister had, and started her fame.

My French friends were very pleased with me for capturing a rich husband, and were really impressed with the romantic qualities of Englishmen, who were thus willing to propose to a penniless girl. There must be something fine about a nation which did not require a "dot". "Tout de même, c'est beaux!" I was told; but they chaffed me for having been deserted by him so soon.

My handsome eldest cousin, Auguste Fouquet Lemaître, who had hunted from Melton all that winter, and was well known in London, promised to give me away, and the wedding was arranged to take place at St. George's, Hanover Square.

The day came at last, and everything went splendidly. Lucy surpassed herself in the production of my lovely white

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satin dress, and also the white dresses of my bridesmaids. Clayton gave me a splendid diamond tiara as one of his presents, and asked me to wear it at the wedding as I was "so like a fairy Queen". I think I was the first bride to discard conventionality and wear a tiara instead of a wreath of orange blossoms. It held in place a Brussels lace veil, quite in the modern fashion.

Clayton's ideas were much ahead of his time in other ways, too. We spent part of our honeymoon in Brighton, where he engaged the public swimming baths for two days for our private use, in order, he said, that he might appreciate the beauty of the mermaid he had married. He made me loose my hair and let it stream in the water and had no use for bathing dresses. Such princely gestures are almost worth the inevitable reckoning, and the rather (in those days) improper, Oriental-fairy-tale atmosphere of the idea fitted superbly into my romantic scheme of things.

The principal tenants of the Glyn estate took the horses out of the carriage at the gate when we returned after the honeymoon and we went through a triumphal arch and down the long drive drawn by grave, Sunday-dressed farmers, most of them wearing "Newgate frill" beards and shaved upper lips, like Abraham Lincoln. I was much touched and impressed by this tribute. Clayton had decided that the big house, Durrington, should be let, and that we should live at Sheering Hall, a three-hundred-years' old farmhouse with a lovely garden, about a mile away from it. As always, I did not question his decision, imagining him all-wise in such matters, and I settled down happily to the task of making the quaint old house as comfortable and attractive as I could.

A banquet was prepared for the tenants and their wives on the night of our return, while the rest of the people feasted in a tent, and afterwards there were speeches and fireworks and unlimited punch was served round. The speeches embarrassed me a good deal, being mainly concerned with hearty wishes for an heir to the estate, but it was all great fun, and

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quite in accordance with my dream-ideas of a bride's home-coming.

Next day, meeting one of the cowmen, as he showed me round the home farm, my husband asked him if he had enjoyed the fireworks. His reply bore witness to the lavishness of the entertainment. "Please, Squire, I did not see 'un," he said. "The punch was that good, I was being wheeled home in Mrs. Brown's pram."

Anything so un-English as I must have looked at this time could not be imagined. The gulf between the appearance of people in the Paris *Beau-Monde* and in the English county society was tremendous. In those days there were no shops where good ready-made clothes could be bought, and the establishments, such as Lucile's had now become, where smart dresses of all kinds were made to measure, were very expensive. The result was that country people got their clothes locally as a rule, and were not very up-to-date. This does not refer to those society people who normally lived in London and merely came to the country for the hunting, or for shooting parties, or even to those who entertained largely in their big houses, but only to the people who lived on their estates and visited London only once or twice a year. Amongst these it was considered a sin to look "foreign" and to have polished nails and Paris clothes.

At the time, I gloried in my different appearance, and remained blissfully ignorant of the flutter which I was causing. On looking back now, I realize that this was conceited and foolish of me, and not in the perfect taste which Grandmamma would have required of me, and which demanded that in Rome you should do as the Romans do, at least up to a point. My only excuse is that Clayton always encouraged me to be as smart as possible, and paid my heavy Lucile bills without even reading them through!

Although by now I had become convinced that Englishmen were the only really adorable men in the world, and the only possible husbands, I missed the brilliant sparkle of

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the French wit and the high standard of mental cultivation I had known in France. The passionate admiration which I afterwards felt for the English character, and for English institutions and mode of living had only begun to dawn then. I was still obsessed by the glamour of France, and thought of my Essex neighbours much as the *Beau-Monde* of Paris looked upon the French people who stayed in the country and never came to the Capital—as funny provincials with old-fashioned narrow views and limited interests. That anyone could bear to lead what I thought were such dull lives of routine and parochial interests seemed to me unbelievable in those first years, and my French ideals held me for a long time. I had not then begun to understand the real goodness and worth of many of these country dwellers, whose consciences, more sensitive than those of my French friends, were beginning to spur them on to make efforts on behalf of the poorer folk. I feel ashamed now when I look back at my blindness and my superiority. Since my terrible shock on seeing the barefoot starving children as we passed through London on our way from Canada in my childhood, I had never had occasion to ponder the problem of poverty. There were no people who could be called poor in Jersey, and the existence of those who were not rich was never spoken of in French society. Such things were considered to be the affair of religious houses, and although gifts to Charity were expected, especially from Dowagers no longer interested in the affairs of this world, personal contact with any but one's own class was unknown. Any young girl who had shown signs of wanting to go "slumming", as many did in England at that time, would have been sternly discouraged in France. Thus, although I remember being shocked to hear that old Jackson, the hedger-and-ditcher, had brought up seven children on 11s. a week (largely by poaching, Clayton explained!) it had not begun to strike me that something should be done about it. At this period my plan for living was based upon the ideals of the French

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eighteenth century ; my Paris experiences having revived and intensified my memories of Grandmamma's teaching, although the newer outlook lacked the stern altruism of her doctrine of *Noblesse Oblige*. I had not begun to take a detached view of things, nor to see that these French wits whom I so much admired were merely clinging on to an imagination of the past, attempting to shut out the unpleasant realities of this world by a steadfast refusal to recognize them. They allowed themselves to see nothing but beauty, and refused to face the fact that the world is moving on, and that the time has gone by, if in fact it ever existed, when the welfare and advancement of a small section of human society mattered more than that of the human race as a whole.

Although consideration for the poor had begun to awaken in England, particularly amongst these frumpish, kindly country people, who struggled to build cottage-hospitals and to maintain village nurses, it was by no means general, and the point of view and sense of values of the majority was still similar to that which I had known in France. People did not realize that they were selfish and unjust. They merely accepted the situation which had evolved through so many generations without question, and enjoyed their lives, not even aware that they were out of date, and that the era of their unquestioned supremacy must very soon come to an end.

Consciousness of humanity's general claims had not yet become poignant or even widely understood in the early 'nineties. There were numbers of "Lady Bountifuls", many landlords were kind and generous, and beautiful ladies worked for votes in their husbands' and friends' constituencies ; but only the mildest stirrings of a sense of general obligation to better conditions among the less fortunate had begun to be felt.

It is almost impossible, now, to realize the extent and the hold of the extraordinary ideas and prejudices which still prevailed in those days. One dowager, who was endeavour-

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ing to initiate me into my county duties, advised me with regard to invitations for the first garden party which I gave at Sheering Hall. "Remember, my dear," she said, delighted at the opportunity to patronize a newcomer, "it is only to garden parties that you must ask the lawyers and doctors—never to luncheons or dinners!"

Brains did not count; the Army, the Navy, the Diplomatic Service, the Church or the Bar were the only undisputed professions of "Gentlemen". Those who earned money in other ways, whether by professional, literary or artistic ability, or by business interests, were ruled out, and were only seen at Hunt balls and charity entertainments. It was considered perfectly natural and right for a rich young man to do nothing but hunt, shoot, fish or pursue some other form of sport. As he grew older he generally undertook unpaid county work of some kind, and in time of war he was expected to accept a commission and if necessary to die with gallantry. In this respect few indeed failed to comply with the standard required, as the South African War was soon to prove.

With all their faults, English men-of-the-world at this date were delightful creatures, ready for every gallantry and every sport. They were exactly like the heroes which I depicted in my books a few years later, and in fact all these portraits were drawn from life. They would be called idlers now, but they were not thought so then, and their unquestioned supremacy gave them that unconscious self-confidence which is the essence of charm.

I am glad that I remember that merry England of the days before the Great War, for it had many refinements and graces, yes, and qualities, that are rapidly passing away.

Although I did not become very intimate with many of my Essex neighbours, I had a small number of real friends who lived near us, especially Frances, Lady Warwick, whose place Easton Lodge was about ten miles from Sheering. My visits to Easton, and to Warwick Castle, which I shall

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describe in the next chapter, were my greatest joy. In her last book she tells wittily how the old Essex ladies came to her at the Hunt Ball at which I first appeared and asked "who *was* she?" and how she laughed as she told them "A Sutherland".—"Yes, but *which* Sutherland?" was the next question, to which I have no doubt that she found an amusing answer, as she was always the kindest of friends to me.

Besides the enchanting parties at Easton and visits to my dear friends the Chisenhale Marshes at Gaynes Park, I used to enjoy going to Bishop's Hall, Colonel Lockwood's place, also near Epping. He was the local M.P. and afterwards became Lord Lambourne. All the guests there were entertaining, and Mrs. Lockwood was a great character. The Colonel, who had a roguish wit, called her his "*Légitime*". She was so very haughty and aloof in her manner to everyone (except to the poor women on the Estate, to whom she was goodness itself) that most people were afraid of her. When she lived at The Hague with her father Sir Ralph Milbanke, who was British Minister there, she used to be known as Mademoiselle "*Tourne-le-Dos*"! We became friends from the first, however, for we shared the same point of view about many things. Her mother, old Lady Milbanke, whom I used to meet when she came to stay at Bishop's Hall, was the exact counterpart of Grandmamma, so of course I reverenced her greatly and loved to hear her talk of her experiences as a bride in the early eighteen-forties, paying visits to her new relations. I tried to recapture the atmosphere which she described in *The Visits of Elizabeth*, when Elizabeth went to stay with Great Aunt Maria, for I had already come across the equivalent of those quaint old days when staying as a girl at Boston House, Middlesex, the home of the Stacy-Clitheroes, now pulled down I suppose.

My husband rented a moor in Scotland for the grouse-shooting in the August after our marriage, and we went on from there to a number of amusing shooting parties, ending

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the year with one at the Miller Mundys' at Shipley Hall in Derbyshire, where we took part in some *tableaux vivants*, which I enjoyed immensely. It was a huge party, and there seemed to be numbers of lovely ladies and good-looking men. There were two brides besides myself, Mrs. George Keppel, and a Mrs. Duncombe, who had also lived in Jersey as a girl. Her mother was the famous Nellie Bromley, the musical comedy actress of Victorian days, celebrated as the friend of the Duke of Beaufort. She had later married Archie Stuart-Wortley, and it was then that she had lived in Jersey. She was a most charming woman, and still very attractive, but dressed always in the dowdiest fashion. A friend commented on this one day, and was told "of course I must look like this until the girls are married—then I can become myself again". She was rewarded for her unselfishness by the early and successful marriages of her lovely daughters.

Mrs. Keppel was by far the most attractive of the three of us, and had a great success at this party. I remember that she played a Christian Martyr, while I played Mary Queen of Scots, aided to assume the suitably tragic expression of my part by the excessively tight dress in which I was encased!

The path of a bride is not altogether an easy one, but I was very happy on the whole during this first year of my marriage.

CHAPTER VII

*The Naughty 'Nineties*

**I**N this chapter I shall attempt to give a picture of the country house visits which were such a feature of those days. I choose Easton Lodge, as this was the most delightful of all the houses in which we used to stay. Many others were larger, more stately, and possessed finer art treasures, but none of them had so enchanting and beautiful a hostess, or such absolute perfection of organization and comfort.

Easton in the 'nineties was the centre of all that was most intelligent and amusing in the society of the day. Its hostess, Lady Warwick, was literally a Queen, the loveliest woman in England, of high rank, ample riches, and great intelligence, and blessed with a charming husband who always adored her, and two (later four) delightful children. Her immense prestige made every invitation an honour, not lightly refused by those fortunate enough to receive it. Here is a picture of this beautiful lady.

Clayton and I used to drive over from Sheering in a brougham drawn by a pair of very fast horses called Paire and Impaire (in memory of our Monte Carlo engagement!). Easton Park was filled with splendid trees, and large herds of fallow deer. A great lawn reached from the house to the road—an old right-of-way—which ran through the grounds to Dunmow. Beyond it was a cricket ground; the lovely gardens lay at the other side of the house, and on the left was a wing of red brick which our hostess kept to herself. From the entrance hall guests were led up steps and through



Frances Countess of Warwick in the early 'nineties

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two " salons " to the saloon, a long room decorated in white and gold, and hung with tapestries and pictures, which ran right through the house, and from either end of which opened big French windows, leading out on to the two terraces. The other reception-rooms and the great staircase opened out of the saloon. Lady Warwick had redecorated the whole house when her husband came into the title not long before this, and it represented the last word in perfection, judged by the standards of those days. Now we would consider that there were too many things in the rooms, too many sofas, too many cushions and knick-knacks, but that was the taste of the time.

For a winter visit, you arrived at about five o'clock, and were greeted at the door by a superb Groom of the Chambers, " Mr. Hall ", who, like Olivier, the head waiter of the Ritz in Paris, knew everyone in the world, and where to place them. I am sure he would have disposed of the body without fuss had any of the guests been careless enough to commit a murder upon the premises ! Half England, including my husband, attended his funeral when he died some years later.

Never were there such servants as at Easton ; all the footmen were the same height, six feet tall, and they seemed to fulfil every want before you were aware of it. To see four housemaids " doing " a bedroom in about ten minutes was quite an experience, so perfect was their drilled efficiency, while if you wanted a telegram sent to Timbuctoo, or your train and boat connections worked out to Hades or the moon, you had only to ask the magnificent Hall, who would instantly make all the arrangements for your journey !

The entrance hall where you left your furs had trophy heads round it, as had every other hall in this kind of house at that time, because all proper Englishmen (who could afford it) went big-game shooting all over the world, and brought back the heads of every sort of strange animal to adorn their stately houses.

After helping to remove your furs, Hall would usher you

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into the saloon, where the hostess, and any lady-guests who had arrived earlier in the day, were to be found, arrayed in the most exquisite tea gowns of sable-trimmed velvet or satin brocade. These garments were fitted to the figure and were not loose as became the fashion later. They showed low V-necks, and had elbow or open sleeves and were of splendid materials, or else of seductive silk gauzes and lace, in either case terribly expensive and very luxurious.

An appetizing tea was laid out on a big round table which was removed by footmen as soon as the meal was over. There would be every kind of lovely muffin, crumpet, scone, cake, sandwich, jam, honey, and Devonshire cream as well, and the guests sat round and joked and chatted and had a delicious meal, like children in a schoolroom. Lady Warwick was the first hostess to introduce this type of "five o'clock", which every country house has now. Before her innovation, only thin bread and butter would have been offered to accompany the cups of tea poured out by the hostess, and handed to each other by the guests, who used to sit about on chairs balancing their cups in their hands without the help of a table.

The parties at Easton consisted of about twenty people, sometimes more, composed of the *crème de la crème* of England's aristocracy, Tory politicians, ambassadors, sportsmen and distinguished men of this type, with or without their wives, were to be found there, and King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, was often amongst the guests. In the 'nineties, not any artists, musicians, actors and actresses, or "bohemian" society types ever came, nor people in business of any kind, but later, after the South African War, these barriers were broken down.

In those days no introductions were made, the assumption being that everyone would already know each other. Perhaps if they obviously did not, the hostess would casually introduce those sitting near. The man instructed to take you in to dinner was of course always introduced, if not

## *The Naughty 'Nineties*

already an acquaintance. The result was a pleasant informality, but there were drawbacks about the plan for a newcomer like myself, and if it had not been for my husband, who knew everybody and told me about them afterwards, I should never even have learnt the names of most of my fellow-guests.

Girls did not often come to these parties unless there were girls in the family, and the average age of the men seemed to be older than it is at similar parties to-day.

Tea provided an opportunity for mental notes concerning those members of the company who seemed most likely to be amusing, with a view to future meetings. When it was over the hostess took the newly-arrived ladies to their bedrooms. These were the height of luxury, such as is now quite common, but was then rare. Exquisite furniture and hangings, big comfortable armchairs and sofas, heaps of down cushions, great white bear hearthrugs, the finest linen, and shaded lamps in the right places to make reading as you rested a joy—these were the commonplace of every room. On little stands within easy reach of the sofa lay books of travel, biographies, and the talked-about new novels. The provision of such luxuries for each guest was an expensive but much-appreciated attention. The writing-tables were wonderful. No known article was missing from them, from books of reference to stamps in a box. Every new device brought out by the Aspreys and Finnigans of that time was sure to be there almost before it was obtainable in London. You could not wish for a special pen, but you discovered it in your pen-tray.

The whole house was beautifully warmed and lit—another rarity at that time, and a very welcome blessing. Ladies did not wear little coatees or scarves over their evening dresses in those days, and often in other houses you became absolutely frozen by draughts in passages, even when the rooms themselves were not horribly cold. Bathrooms were still rare, even at Easton, but behind a screen in each room,

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tipped against the wall, was a huge, flat but deep tin tub, painted to match the colouring of the curtains and with a lovely woolly bath-mat of the same tone and a specially big bath-towel as well. Housemaids set out this bath and brought immense cans of hot water when they called the guests in the morning, so that baths, really quite adequate ones, were available for everyone. How the poor creatures carried the great cans I don't know. Men-servants brought them to the bedroom doors I believe, but the business of emptying the baths and carrying away the water must have been tremendous, as well as that of preparing them.

Lovely flowers were on every dressing-table, and just before going into dinner, Lady Warwick's eldest son, Guy, Lord Brooke, then about eleven, used to bring round to each lady's room a magnificent spray of gardenias, stephanotis or orchids, as it was the fashion to wear these long sprays in those days. The cost of providing all these quantities of expensive flowers must have been fantastic, and the fruit at dinner was of the same order of rare perfection. Even the men were all provided with buttonholes, and the flowers on the dinner-table, which were changed for every meal, were truly magnificent, and arranged most elaborately, sometimes in high vases round which you could only peep at your opposite fellow-guests.

Bare polished tables had not come into fashion then and pure white damask cloths of the loveliest designs were in use. The food and wine were as marvellous as the rest of the arrangements, and the courses were so many, and so various, that it took a long time to get through the meals. The guests went in to dinner arm in arm, according to rank the first night, but less formally afterwards. When the ladies left the room the men stayed on a short time only, drinking port, but not often old brandy at that date.

None of the women would have used powder or lipstick, or had any kind of a bag. An ostrich feather fan was often carried, and long gloves were worn, being taken off at dinner

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and put on again afterwards. Those who did use powder made the most of the opportunity after leaving the dining-room to rush up to their rooms and put some on, but I never remember seeing anyone wearing lip rouge then, except old Lady Charles Beresford, who was considered quite a joke because of the way she would dab red grease on her face almost anywhere but near her mouth! She also had a pair of blackened eyebrows, put on nearly a quarter of an inch above her real ones!

Painted faces such as we see on everyone now would have been described as "frightful form" forty years ago. One or two people who were notorious for being "enamelled" would be thought scarcely done up at all to-day. It was impossible to buy cosmetics in London in the 'nineties, except at a theatrical shop. There were no "beauty parlours", and hairdressers were respectful and retiring creatures who came to your house to do your hair, and with whom no one dreamt of discussing their private affairs.

After dinner, on the first night of an Easton party, when the men joined the ladies, whichever of them had been admired would be singled out for the attentions of the most dashing and adroit of the men, but good manners were such that no lady was ever left alone, and all of them would find that some man had come and sat down beside her. Men did all the chasing and contriving to see the ladies of their choice in those days. Etiquette was observed, in spite of the appearance of ease, and no one ever "lolled" on sofas, or behaved in an undignified manner. Above all, there was *no* touching of each other even in seemingly accidental ways. It might be a lovely lady's own lover who was sitting beside her, but he would never lean over her or touch her arm to accentuate his speech, for all touching in public was taboo. The modern trick of "pawing" only came in after the Great War, and would have been considered "servants' hall behaviour" in those days.

After dinner some groups went into the billiard-room

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to play bezique, for bridge was still unknown, and at Easton there was no gambling at baccarat, as there was at Shipley and Titchbourne. The guests were too interesting and intelligent and amused with one another to want other distractions such as cards, and the majority simply sat about on the comfortable sofas and talked, tête-à-tête, or listened in groups to one of the brilliant men who were always there.

By the end of the first evening you usually knew which member of the party intended to make it his business to amuse you—in a discreet way—during the rest of the visit, in the hope of who knows what reward? In such houses there was always a tray, on which stood beautifully-cleaned silver candlesticks, in the staircase hall, one of which you carried up to your room, even if you did not need it at all. It might be that in lighting it for you your admirer might whisper a suggestion of a rendezvous for the morning; if not, probably on your breakfast tray you would find a note from him given by his valet to your maid, suggesting where and when you might chance to meet him for a walk, or else inviting you to stand with him when shooting after lunch. There was no stupid hesitation or waiting upon circumstance about the would-be-lovers of those days. The beaux of the 'nineties were experts at arranging pleasant things and were full of self-confidence. They liked to make all the running, or to show by their little attentions the pains which they were taking to be with you and to please you. The modern chasing of men by women was unknown, perhaps because it was unnecessary. The women attracted the men by being demure and retiring, never by blatancy and obvious attempts to please or domineer.

Next day the ladies came down to breakfast or had it in their rooms if they wished, just as they do to-day. Downstairs breakfast was at a lot of little tables, so that the noted moroseness of Englishmen in the morning could be indulged without appearing rude! They could sit together at a table without bothering with the women.





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Supposing you had settled to meet the person who was amusing you in the saloon, say, at eleven, you went there casually at the agreed time, dressed to go out, and found your cavalier awaiting you. Sometimes Lady Warwick would be there too, but she always sensed whether this was an arranged meeting or an accidental one. If it was intended, she would say graciously that Stone Hall, her little Elizabethan pleasure house in the Park, was a nice walk before lunch, and thus make it easy to start. Should some strangers who did not know the ropes happen to be there, too, and show signs of accompanying you on the walk, she would immediately engage them in conversation until you had got safely away.

The charming man whom you had met—in my experience they were all experts at pleasing woman—would do his utmost to be agreeable, discovering your tastes, and talking to you about the things which he thought would interest you, not merely about his own occupations and hobbies as they do to-day.

When you arrived at Stone Hall you would go and admire the quaint Elizabethan rooms, and could sit and talk seriously of politics and literature, or no doubt, in many cases, cover more dangerous ground. There were books of romantic poetry about on the tables, which gave an opportunity for the cavalier to read aloud to his lady pieces that he thought would express his emotions better than his own words, supposing that his gifts in this direction were inadequate to the occasion. Gracious words and apt phrases still meant something in those days, and cultivation of mind was admired and not laughed at as it is to-day.

You walked back to lunch in time to change into a "dressy" frock. Your friend was discreet, and did not always sit at your table the first day. After lunch you put on an immensely long sealskin coat and went for a drive to see some local centre of interest, or if there was shooting you changed again into a tweed suit and stood with the guns

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for one or two drives, or perhaps you curled up in your room and had a sleep before tea. Whichever it was, you came in or woke in time to change into a lovely tea-gown for tea at five o'clock, and the men changed into equally attractive velvet smoking-suits. I remember Lord Cairns had an emerald green one, and Clayton's was sapphire blue, while Seymour Wynne Finch had one made out of a thick silk Paisley shawl with black facings. The most regal of all was that of the Grand Duke Michael, whose suit was of rich crimson velvet.

Yes, those were brave days !

After tea you did as you pleased. The beautiful hostess generally retired to her wing with some favoured guest, and the rest wandered off into the various sitting-rooms, and you either talked again to your morning's friend, or listened to the general conversation of the rest, which was often extremely interesting and brilliant, and covered most of the serious topics of the day.

By the end of one of these enchanting winter visits in the 'nineties you had enjoyed yourself extremely and had learnt a great deal that was of interest. Your flirtation might or might not develop into a more serious friendship, and plans might be made to meet again in London or elsewhere, and to have a *partie-carrée* lunch at Willis's or the Amphitron Club. You could not lunch alone with a man until much later on, after the South African War had changed the old standards completely. Even then it was done only *sub rosa*, and in a quiet corner.

No one who stayed at Easton ever forgot their hostess, and most of the men fell hopelessly in love with her. In my long life, spent in so many different countries, and during which I have seen most of the beautiful and famous women of the world, from film-stars to Queens, I have never seen one who was so completely fascinating as Daisy Warwick. She would sail in from her own wing, carrying her piping bullfinch, her lovely eyes smiling with the merry innocent

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expression of a Persian kitten that has just tangled a ball of silk. Hers was that supreme personal charm which I later described as "It", because it is quite indefinable, and does not depend upon beauty or wit, although she possessed both in the highest degree. She was never jealous or spiteful to other women, and if she liked you she was the truest, most understanding friend. If she did not like a person, they simply ceased to exist. Her lovely eyes grew cold as Medusa's, and the individual withered away. I have seen this expression once or twice, but fortunately not turned upon me! It was reserved for those who had really annoyed her, and was never inflicted upon mere bores, to whom she was extremely kind, as she was also to everyone in trouble.

I remember one morning when she and I happened to be sitting in the saloon before anyone else was down, a new curate of one of her villages was shown in. He was a prim person, who fasted seriously in Lent. During conversation about the parish he mentioned that some ungodly people, non-churchgoers, were in trouble, and that the husband was very ill. It was God's judgment, he said, and they did not deserve help. Daisy listened with a far-away look that I knew well, and while carrying on the conversation with the curate about a new church hall which she was building she leant over and rang the bell. When the footman appeared she told him to send the housekeeper, and she still went on talking sweetly to the curate. When the housekeeper arrived she looked up casually and telling her the name and address of the "ungodly" wretches, she said, "I hear they are in great trouble. Please have beef tea and jellies and port sent round to them at once, and say that I will drive over and see them this afternoon."

Then she went on talking to the dumbfounded curate about the erection of the hall, as if nothing had happened.

I made a portrait of Daisy Warwick as Lady Tilchester in my book *The Reflections of Ambrosine* and I dedicated

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another book to *The Sun's Rays* as she seemed to me to be, in those far-off times. We have both seen many changes and troubles since those halcyon days, but now we can smile together once more and look back upon them with happy memories.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Looking back upon the Naughty 'Nineties*

**A**S can be gathered from this description of a typical country house visit forty years ago, the standard of morals in the 'nineties was much the same in England as in France. Conventional respect for monogamy was observed, in the general interest, and no one wished to upset the apple cart, or shock the community. Life was so delightful as it was, that any disturbance or eccentricity was considered to be "bad form". Tolerance towards individual human failings was strong, however, and so long as the rules of the game were observed, and public scandal avoided, the members of Society did not judge one another. You must have good manners and good taste, and you must not act in such a way as to thrust your peccadilloes into view ; people were only too anxious not to see them, and if you were stupid enough to force them to do so, you must pay the price ; but so long as appearances were kept up, all was well, and everything moved upon greased wheels.

As in France, girls must be, and were, irreproachable. The attractive, sought-after men of those days would have thought it almost dishonourable to flirt with them unless they intended to marry them, and a girl in good society who was known to have let her partners kiss her was spoken of in shocked whispers by the others in her set, and had a poor chance of marrying. The reign of the unmarried woman did not begin until after the Great War. Before that the old French saying was true in England as in France, "*Le mariage tourne la clef de la liberté et du coffrefort*", in spite of the non-

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existence of the Married Women's Property Act until the 'eighties.

There was one great difference, however, between English and French society, in as much as that in England nine-tenths of the marriages were made for love, at any rate on the man's side, it being considered rather despicable for a man to marry solely for money. A large proportion of marriages, being made from inclination and not mere convenience, were therefore extremely happy, and if the bride was in love with her husband as well, people were delighted with the romance of the thing and faithfulness in such cases was admired and approved.

In France all marriages were arranged, and the percentage of genuinely happy pairs was therefore a good deal smaller. The result was that whereas in England many steadfastly loving couples existed in all classes, including the highest society, in France faithfulness to husband or wife after the first year or two was considered positively bourgeois by the smartest people, and constancy was expected and admired only between illicit lovers, except among very religious people.

In England as in France, in the society set every married woman was considered fair game, the assumption being that if the husband did not look after her that was his fault. If she happened to be in love with her husband, and so did not respond to advances, well that was the luck of the game ; many good fish refuse all bait, but this does not detract from but rather adds to the interest of fishing. If, on the other hand, she was not satisfied with her lawful partner, the gallants claimed that it was a shame and a pity to let the poor thing languish unconsoled !

One fact redeemed this point of view from utter condemnation. Love affairs at this period were sentimental and refined. However ephemeral, they always contained an element of romance. They were never undertaken either for money, or out of sheer lust. A cloak of glamour surrounded

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the whole matter, perhaps rendering temptation all the more irresistible on that account, but nevertheless removing all element of commercial traffic or bestiality. Nothing was allowed to appear crude and blatant, and what were essentially ugly facts were made to seem beautiful and even admirable.

Thus it happened that in the 'nineties quite a number of lovely ladies did have lovers, as in all ages, but perhaps more at that time than in Early Victorian days, when religious beliefs held greater sway, and more, I believe, than they do to-day, when wild oats are sown so freely before marriage by both sexes. The good-looking unattached men had a wonderful time forty years ago, while many husbands were the lovers of their friends' wives.

In spite of all this, the married state was looked upon as a permanent institution, imposing duties which must be carried out and obligations on both sides which must be fulfilled regardless of individual feelings. Divorce was extremely rare. If the woman was the culprit, it spelt the end of her social career, and no return was possible. Husbands, however erring, were seldom got rid of, for the position of divorced wives, even though quite innocent, was invidious, and in Queen Victoria's day they were not allowed to go to Court. Thus there were no unseemly outbursts, quarrels and passionate jealousies. Couples were seldom obviously unhappy ; when not sincerely devoted, they were indifferent, well-mannered, even friendly, while remaining deliberately blind to each others' external attachments. All duties accomplished, the emotional life of the individual was considered to be his or her own concern. Constantly the affairs reached only to the sentimental level, and in any event the physical aspect was never stressed. Above all *there must be no scandal*. An innocent stranger coming into the midst of this society would never have seen or heard anything to cause shock or surprise, unless of course he had been indiscreet enough to wander in the corridors at night, as "Elizabeth" inadvertently did while ghost hunting ! In that case it is

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just possible that he would have chanced, like Elizabeth, to see—a ghost!

I am not lauding the morals and manners of the “naughty ‘nineties” which might fairly be described as “whited sepulchres” if the metaphor is not too mixed; I am merely attempting to present a true picture of the life of society people at this period, and to define their underlying moral standards. For standards of a sort did undoubtedly exist and were faithfully observed, and they compare favourably, I believe, with those now existing in countries in which divorce has been made an easy thing.

I have never been able to see how a ridiculous formality such as a few weeks’ residence in Reno, coupled with the services of a good lawyer, can make any difference whatever to the morality or otherwise of becoming the mistress—or so-called wife—of another man, during the lifetime of your first husband. Such breaking of vows, I still believe, draws an inevitable Nemesis, which cannot be exorcised by a mere legal formality, while the fundamental immorality of injuring husband and children by public divorce in order to be able to claim the joys of public respectability seems to me great. To divorce and remarry represents, I believe, a mere shirking of the issue, and it usually involves selfish behaviour and injury to others which is, I consider, far more immoral than the physical infidelity. I think it less wrong to remain content with an uneasy illicit relationship, and to renounce the joys of officially recognized marital relations for the sake of public decency, and the welfare of your children, than to clamour for a legal blessing which alters none of the facts and which is in reality nothing but a cowardly and childish effort to pass the responsibility for individual moral behaviour on to the shoulders of the Judiciary.

Either monogamy is right and lapses therefrom are regrettable and reprehensible, or it is not, in which case Church ceremonies and divorce-court pronouncements are both anachronisms. If it is right, divorce-court procedures

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can do no more than disguise the wrong done by immorality, and prevent the culprits from continuing to endure public censure for their failure to maintain the standard laid down.

The illicit lovers who take the responsibility for their sin, if it be a sin, upon their own shoulders, renouncing the satisfaction of open recognition of their attachment for the sake of society, are braver and freer spirits than those who fly to the law for release from their moral burden, like a child to its nurse. The exercise of circumspection and the maintenance of public appearances is a wholesome discipline which, when self-imposed, is a finer thing than divorce.

Which is not to say that either of these courses is right !

Although brought up by my French books and relations to consider these standards perfectly satisfactory, even ideal, in view of the supposedly inevitable fickleness of the human heart, and the polygamous nature of man, I secretly—almost subconsciously—thought otherwise. I felt instinctively that romance and a succession of lovers were not compatible, although I told myself that such ideas were “bourgeois” and out-of-date. Yet I read over again and again Tennyson’s beautiful description in “Guinevere” of a man’s ideal love, and I knew that for a romantic type of woman the flattery of a host of lovers was a very poor substitute for this kind of devotion from one.

I craved for my romantic ideals to come true in my own life, and in the hope of attaining them I postponed marriage until I was twenty-seven years old.

Perhaps I was influenced by the memory of Grandmamma’s teachings, for although I was much too young when I left Canada for her to have spoken to me on these subjects, her whole life was eloquent of her belief in the absolutely binding nature of the marriage tie. She would have felt herself degraded by the lightest word or look of flirtation, and it is possible that she unconsciously conveyed some of her strong conviction on this point even to my childish mind. My mother, too, was a perfect example of the faithful wife, never

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faltering from her constant devotion, in the spirit to her first husband, in the body to her second.

My own theoretical convictions at this period were an odd mixture of the two points of view, and though they seem to me rather casuistical as I write them down now, they were sincerely held and honestly observed at the time.

I believed that you must never break your given word, unless specifically released from it by the other party for purposes of his own, not merely at your request and for your advantage. In this ordinance I included the marriage vows, and I used to say that I thought it would be much better if, at the marriage service, no vows at all were exchanged, and prayers only were made that the love of the husband and wife might continue; so that if either of them should subsequently stray there would be no question of broken promises, which I firmly believed brought their own retribution, quite apart from the rights and wrongs of the actual misdeeds.

My peculiar mythology was at the back of this idea, though I was hardly conscious of it, I think. I believed that the God Nemesis, or a special set of Fates or Furies, or as I later learnt to call the retributive influence in the world, the Law of Karma, would inexorably dog the footsteps of those who broke their vows, and that it was right and just that punishment should be meted out, either in this life, or in some future earthly reincarnation, to those who broke covenants for their own advantage.

In *Three Weeks* I made the "Lady" pay for her failure to observe her matrimonial vows with her life, and I believed it quite just that she should do so, and that the tragic ending of the story restored the moral balance of the whole book.

Over and above this God of Retribution, or Law of Karma, I envisaged an Eternal and all-loving God, represented on earth by Christ, Who forgave all sins committed as a result of overwhelming temptation or unusual circumstance, Who understood the thoughts and emotions and difficulties of His children, and Who judged each action rather

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by the intention than by the deed itself. Thus I pictured the conventional moral code as one which, on account of the exchange of vows in the marriage ceremony, was absolutely binding so far as "Karma" was concerned, and which could only be broken under pain of severe and inescapable earthly punishment in this life or some other.

In the light of what I considered real morality, however, that is, the standards expected by the Supreme God of my imagination, I believed that technical immorality might sometimes become moral, and that actions committed out of very great love, if willingly expiated in accordance with Karmic laws, were not necessarily degrading to the spirit. Everything depended, I believed, upon whether wrong were done to an innocent party, such as a lover's wife or children, or even his former mistress, in which case no emotion could provide an excuse. Deception of any kind appeared to me abominable, and the taking of lover or mistress only justifiable if all pretence at love for the legitimate partner had been abandoned, and if intimate relations had long since ceased. The idea that a woman could share herself between two men has always appeared to me wholly repulsive. As long as marriage is a reality, physical faithfulness is a *sine qua non*, for the husband has the right to be sure that children bearing his name are his own.

Following the ideas of the date, however, I used to tell myself that if a husband deliberately neglected his wife and courted other women, then after a time she was released from her loyalty to him, so long as she did not injure his name by public scandal, or expect him to acknowledge children that were not his. If she became genuinely enamoured of another man—and not for any other reason whatever—she might, I used to believe, accept his love without degradation, provided that he was himself without present ties, whether of wife or mistress. Secrecy must be maintained in relation to the outer world, but the husband must not be deceived, and pains must be taken to avoid injuring others in any way.

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Such was the creed which my sophisticated education and experience had led me to imagine represented the highest feasible morality. Yet after ten years of married life, spent in the midst of this atmosphere, I wrote my second book, *The Reflections of Ambrosine*, and in it I showed my heroine in just such circumstances as those which should theoretically justify her in taking a lover—if ever any circumstances could do so. A drunken, detestable and deliberately unfaithful husband, and a much-loved friend without other ties; the circumstances such that no scandal whatever would follow. Yet my heroine did not take her lover, and this is what I made her say to the portrait of an eighteenth-century beauty the next day :

" You, pretty Marquise, would call me a fool because to-day Anthony is not my lover, but I oh ! I am glad. He did not even kiss my finger-tips last night. We parted sadly after a storm of words neither he nor I had ever meant to speak—— Why the situation is as it is, I cannot tell ! In my bringing up, the idea of taking a lover after marriage seemed a more or less natural thing, and not altogether a deadly sin, provided the affair was conducted *sans fanfaronnade*, without scandal—— Why did I hesitate ? I do not know. There is something in my spirit which cried out against the meanness of it—the degradation, the sacrilege. I could not break my word to Augustus. Oh ! I could not stoop to desecrate myself, and to act, for all the future, hours of deceit."

These were my real views in 1902 ; for the scene described actually occurred. I was frightfully in love—or thought myself so—with the man whose portrait I drew as Sir Anthony Thornhirst in the book, but we said good-bye that night and did not meet again. He died in a tragic way a few years afterwards.

With advancing years—I have two grandsons at Eton, so I must be getting old I suppose, though I laugh to think how much younger I feel to-day than I did after that night in

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1902!—I have shaken off the superficially cynical point of view derived from my French upbringing, and have returned to the worship of pure romance which always underlay it, and which my long experience has taught me to be certain is the only thing worth having. There are many who believe that it is dying out of the modern world, but I am sure that this is not so in reality. The forms have changed, perhaps, and much that passed for romance, and was in fact mere make-believe and flattery, has been blown away in the strong wind that heralds the dawn of a new age. Divorces are commoner, no doubt, and all pretence of decency, whether public or private, has disappeared from the lives of a prominent few; but as I watch the full, happy, married lives of my children and of so many of my young friends, I say with certainty that there is a far better chance of maintaining an atmosphere of real romance within the marriage bond to-day than there was in the days of my youth.

The reason of this I do not know. Is the new generation better, less prone to listen to flattery? Are the men too occupied with work to let their fancies roam so freely? Is the general plan for living less subtly tempting to infidelity? Have we to thank the—perhaps excessive—pre-marital freedom since the War, or merely the art of the beauty specialist?

Who can say? All I know is that the world of 1936 seems to me to be fundamentally more sincere and thus more truly romantic, than the world of the Naughty 'Nineties.

Whether it is as gay and carefree and gracious is another story. To every age its qualities and its defects, and the period that I have been describing was undoubtedly filled with charm, and with a grace and quietness which we lack to-day.

CHAPTER IX

*The Writing of "Elizabeth"*

MY daughter Margot (now Lady Dawson) was born in the June of the year following my marriage, and was an immense joy to me. Clayton was disappointed that she was not a boy, but I was secretly delighted, as I knew nothing of little boys and their ways. I thoroughly enjoyed preparing the large wardrobe considered necessary for baby girls in those days, and remember stitching away for hours at voluminous corded silk pelisses and adorable muslin caps and little satin coats. I was fortunate in getting a most capable and devoted nurse, Charlotte Dawson, who took all maternal responsibilities off my shoulders from the start, and I and my children alike should be profoundly grateful for this, as I was always quite foolish about domestic affairs of this kind, and Clayton detested them to the point of building a new wing on to Sheering Hall in order that nursery sounds and smells of food should be kept well away from him!

After my second daughter grew to governess age, Mrs. Dawson went to be nurse to a family in Oxfordshire, where she stayed until her death last year. She was a splendid example of the many beloved "Nannies" on whose self-sacrificing care the health of each succeeding generation of the English upper classes depends, for she was the very opposite to the odious "Orford" of my own childhood.

I had rather bad health during the next two or three years, for I developed typhoid fever not long after my baby was born and the following season I had con-

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cussion of the brain, due to a fall during some amateur theatricals in Edinburgh, where we went to stay with Lord Rosslyn at his place Dysart. We had the most delightful time there and I enjoyed myself so much that it was worth the fall! We had the temerity to play "Diplomacy", and I was "Dora", while Mrs. Willie James was "Zicka". We thought we were superb! My accident did not take place until the last performance, when an acted "fall" turned into a real one, and I hit my head against some furniture as I fell.

When I was not ill, however, I led a most agreeable life, staying with friends all over the country for amusing house-parties, and spending the cold spring months at Cannes or Monte Carlo or Rome. The Scottish Moor I did not face again, having learnt in my first year how much men detest having women about when there is serious sport afoot! Instead I used to take my precious baby to Dieppe in August to meet her French godmother, Margot Fouquet Lemaître, who had been so kind to me in Paris, and I enjoyed these brief returns to the French atmosphere of cultivation and wit after the months I had spent in the previous winter attempting to pull my feet out of Essex clay.

After the typhoid fever and the concussion the long walks round the covers became altogether too much for me. Clayton was anxious about my health, and told me that my feet were too small for thick boots and trampings over fields. I still attempted to do this when we went to shooting-parties, though I really detested walking in the mud, but when we were at home at Sheering I gladly gave up the struggle, and wore beautiful indoor clothes and took to reading by the hour as I had done in Jersey years before.

Meanwhile, Clayton, whose real interest lay in his estate and his pheasants, tramped round his farms alone, or else accompanied by one of my bridesmaids who stayed with us a good deal. She was pretty and good-natured, of the type who willingly baths dogs, fetches corn for colts, and goes for

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long walks in the rain, and I was grateful to her for taking over these distasteful duties for me, not being yet as wise in the ways of men as I became later. An incident occurred about this time which gave me an intimation of the new situation. It was at a big house where the host was an intimate friend of my husband's. They had been at Oxford together. A large party was there, and the host himself took me round the new rose garden in the late afternoon of the second day. He began to make the usual insinuations that I was the fairest rose in the garden, and that he had fallen in love with me, and as we reached the summer-house he bent and kissed me!

I was so taken aback that I could only look haughty, and at that moment other guests appeared on the scene. I was dreadfully perturbed, wondering if I should tell my husband of his friend's behaviour, but fearing that he might make a fuss and that we should have to leave. However, just as I finished dressing for dinner my conscience made me go into Clayton's room, next to mine. His servant, Billingham, was just handing him his coat—I can see it all now—but as I appeared the man discreetly left the room. Clayton turned to the glass to do something more to his white tie, so I plucked up courage and told him the story of the awful thing that had occurred.

He turned round, his whimsical face lit by a delightful smile.

"No! Did he? Dear old Bob!" was all he said, and went back to his tie-fixing again.

This was my first lesson. It was completed later on during a trip to Venice, about which I was filled with romantic excitement. My husband laughed at my sentimental notions, and insisted that my maid should accompany us everywhere, in order, he said, that she might have a chance of seeing the sights too. At last, filled with depression, I flew to my journal and wrote, from sheer imagination, the passionate descriptions of love in Venice which ten years afterwards

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re-lived in *Three Weeks*. Perhaps if I had really had a lover there I could not have written all that my wild imagination pictured in my disappointed soul! My romance, I realized, was over, after only two years of marriage. It was a bitter blow.

Clayton, however, was invariably kind to me in his humorous unsentimental way. His ideas belonged to his time—he was a good deal older than me—and my French upbringing had taught me nothing if not to conceal my feelings and to face shocks without showing that I cared. There must, I realized, be a reverse side to the alluring medal of generally indulged marital infidelity—a medal which I now felt to be made of the cheapest tinsel. “Above all, no scandal” was the creed I had been taught, however, and to this I clung.

There had seemed to be some strange fate preventing me from attending a Court even before my wedding, and due to my various illnesses, and I did not make my bow until the May of 1896. Queen Alexandra, then Princess of Wales, held the Court, in the absence, through illness, of Queen Victoria.

My journal is, of course, very instructive about the matter, for here was my first real experience of the Kings and Queens of my childish dreams. I wrote down minute descriptions, plans of the rooms, comments upon the appearance of everyone there, and ended up with copious illustrations, of which one is of myself in my very grand dress, with all the Glyn diamonds and pearls! I felt very pleased with my looks, I remember, and enjoyed the afternoon immensely. Here is a piece out of my journal :

“There were numbers of hideous women there, with Ye Gods! what skins! Brown or pimply, or red and coarse! One could count on one’s fingers the women who could stand being viewed in full regalia in the daylight with impunity. Muriel Wilson looked the best of all, her dark skin is so pure. She has ‘the look’, and so has Lady de Grey, who was one behind me, quite splendid in cloth of gold and

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mauve velvet. There was another woman in a shabby black dress, beautiful diamonds and rather dirty feathers in her hair, who also looked every inch a great lady ; she walked with her head up and had a fine carriage and an air of distinction. Most of the rest shuffled along. Some of the feathers on the heads of the real habituées would have been suitable for the three one sees under a glass case in a cleaner's window ! ”

A few nights before the Drawing Room there had been a masked ball at Covent Garden. In those days it was considered rather a smart thing to go, and one wore a mask and domino and did not tell one's name. Lady Rosslyn (Violet) and I went together as bats—“ Les Chauves Souris ”. I conducted all my exciting conversations with engaging strangers in French, and finally we were taken to supper in the Turf Club box by a member who had not the slightest idea who we were. There, to use a modern phrase, I “ got off ” tremendously with a very handsome young man, a member of the Court. He made violent love to me in French, called me “ Beau Masque ”, said he would know my voice anywhere, and we arranged that the next time we should meet I should whisper “ Chauve Souris ”, so that he might be certain. My husband was there too and was intensely amused at the ardour of my handsome admirer.

As I was coming out of the Throne Room at the Drawing Room after all the curtseying, I saw the young man standing among the other gentlemen, in his white breeches and beautiful gold braided coat. He bent a little as I passed, and I was able to look up into his eyes and whisper “ Chauve Souris ” ! He nearly jumped out of his skin, as it was the last place he expected to see the French stranger of the masked ball ! We laughed about this the other day, now two elderly people !

The trains were over four yards long then, and always of magnificent stuffs. Think of the modern debutante trailing four yards and having to make six or more curtsies ! Not



Mrs. Glyn in court dress, 1904



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nearly so many people went to Court in the 'nineties, so there was room for dignity. The first time I attended a Court in King Edward's reign I saw that there was already a great difference ; it was no longer called a "Drawing Room", and was in the evening, and held in the big ballroom as it is now, and was much more fun.

My unlucky star seemed to wane in this year, which saw the end of many of the illnesses and misfortunes which had spoilt the last three years for me. Other troubles of the financial kind of which I had been so gloriously free since I married were approaching, but I did not know it then, and life was much pleasanter than it had been. Clayton seemed to fall in love with me all over again, and the past was forgotten. We went about to many amusing parties, and spent more time in London, where we had a flat in Sloane Street.

The chic place to dine on Sunday nights was the Savoy, and we often went there. The room overlooking the Embankment was panelled in dark shining mahogany in those days, and made a beautiful background for women's faces.

We spent the next winter in Italy and had a delightful time in Rome and also at St. Remo, where we went because our friends the Walronds had a villa there. Sir William Walrond (afterwards Lord Waleran) was the Chief Conservative Whip at that time. It is amusing to think that his Parliamentary duties did not prevent him from enjoying the possession of an Italian villa. Those were leisurely days !

I believe that the greatest of all the mighty changes which have taken place in the last forty years is the loss of leisureliness and repose. No one seemed in a hurry then, and there was always time to enjoy pleasant things to the full. No one wanted to rush on to a second amusement long before the end of the first, and I am convinced that we enjoyed the present all the more because it was untroubled by constant thought for the future. The unnatural restlessness of a few

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years ago, already, I hope and believe, a thing of the past, would have seemed sheer insanity in the 'nineties. You cannot have romantic love affairs if you are in a hurry. You certainly cannot talk intelligently if there is no time to finish your sentences, and if the conversation consists mainly of such phrases as "if you know what I mean".

When my second daughter Juliet (now Lady Williams) was born, Clayton's disappointment at my second failure to produce a son was so great that he went off to Monte Carlo the moment he was sure that I was not going to die (a matter of doubt for some days), and proceeded to lose a lot of money. I was mercifully ignorant of this at the time or I believe I should not have had the strength to recover at all. As it was I made rather a slow business of it, and had scarcely become myself again before I fell ill once more after getting very wet out shooting. I had rheumatic fever, as we called it in those days, and it left me with dreadful rheumatic pains in my back and legs. I was too ill to be taken abroad, and I believe everyone thought that I should die, and certainly that I would never be able to walk again. Clayton was full of solicitude, and my mother, to whom he had given a little house close to Sheering so that she could be near at hand, was heartbroken. My dear, unselfish mother! Always caring for other people. I like to think how fond she was of Clayton, and how invariably kind he was to her.

One day I had a fit of rebellion against the idea of dying young, to which I had hitherto been quite resigned, and had, in fact, cherished as being rather touching and romantic! I determined that whatever followed I must at least laugh once more first. So I asked my mother to get me out my very early journals, which were written in the form of long letters to her, when I visited our relations in France, or stayed with friends in England. I did not send them through the post, but kept them to show her when I returned. I re-read all these old letters, and also my real journals of the early 'nineties, and I

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laughed and laughed ! Suddenly I saw that if they seemed so funny to me, other people might find them amusing also, and that it was worth while to try to put them together in a readable form.

No one imagined that I could be serious when I announced that I would write a book, but the poor invalid had to be humoured, and everybody in the house pandered to my lightest wish. No one knew that MSS. should be written only on one side of the paper, or in fact anything about the business and art of writing books, but some nice blue copy-books were procured for me from the village shop, and I began to write.

In my journals containing descriptions of parties at Easton or Warwick, Lady Angela St. Clair-Erskine often appeared as the "*enfant terrible*". She was quite fascinating and possessed the family charm so strongly developed in her two elder sisters, the Duchess of Sutherland and Lady Westmorland. Mark Lockwood, who was always a wit, used to call her "Lady Angela Capsicum".

I pictured to myself how a young girl, such as she, might view the society "world" if she came into it really unsophisticated, but with a fine perception ; and with such a type for my heroine, I found the writing of the imaginary letters quite easy. I had no idea of publishing anything, but wrote for the sheer fun of it, much as I had done my little sketch portraits years before.

Thus *The Visits of Elizabeth* was written directly into a set of children's copy-books, the leaves of which I covered on both sides with the fine handwriting of the date, and, as usual with me, extraordinary spelling. I have the books still.

The enjoyment of this pastime so improved my health that as the warm weather returned I began to get up, and even to hobble about on two sticks. It is quaint to think that I can dance and bend with far more suppleness now than I could thirty-five years ago. For *Elizabeth*—minus the

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French portion, which was added later—was written in the Spring of the year 1900, and my début as an authoress thus began with the new century.

Thinking to please me, and to give me a surprise, my husband took the copy-books to London with him, and showed them to Mr. Jayes, then Sub-Editor of the *Standard*, whom he chanced to meet at the Garrick Club. He was rather shamefaced about it, for he felt it was hardly “the thing” for his wife to write books, and certainly, if I had not been so ill, my efforts would not have been allowed to see the light of day. Mr. Jayes took the copy-books to read, and Mr. Douglas Sladen told me recently how well he remembered the commotion caused in the Club when some bits of *The Visits* were read out. Mr. Jayes was chaffed, and told he had written them himself.

Clayton returned to Sheering and confessed to me what he had done. I was tremendously excited, and when next day we received a telegram from Mr. Jayes asking if he might come down and see us on Sunday, and adding “Elizabeth will do”, I tried to throw away my sticks and jump across the room with delight.

As we did not know anything about the business of publishing, Mr. Jayes suggested that we should leave everything to him, and he chose to maintain the strictest secrecy about the authorship of *Elizabeth*. Presently I had the joy of seeing the first “Visit” in *The World*, but even the Editor, I believe, did not know who had written it. As the Letters appeared week by week the excitement about them grew and grew. A friend of ours came down to see us, bringing a copy of *The World* to amuse me in case we did not take it in. She was much intrigued about the mystery of the author and wondered who could have written the letters, as it was evidently someone who knew Society well. I tried to look innocent while we discussed the characters, but at last gave the secret away by laughing. Even so she would not believe me for a long time when I assured her that I was really the

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author. I can hear her now saying so ingenuously—"But, Nellie darling, it *can't* possibly be you! A really clever person must have written these letters!"

English society was evidently pleased with them, for when the final chapter had appeared in *The World*, Mr. Jayes came down again and urged their publication in book form, as a novel. He had a friend, he said, a young man, Gerald Duckworth, who was just starting as a publisher, and who would launch the book. He explained that for a novel it must be lengthened, and I therefore got out my French journals and interpolated all the French part of the story.

Thus *The Visits of Elizabeth* became a volume, and I became an author!

I was much disturbed as to whether or no I should sign the book with my real name, or use a nom-de-plume, or remain anonymous, as in the serial presentation. I consulted Daisy Warwick, who had come over from Easton just then to see how the poor invalid was getting on, and had found her almost cured, and brim-full of excitement as the result of the success of *Elizabeth*.

We decided that my own baptismal and legal names Elinor Glyn, sounded like a nom-de-plume, and would be taken as such outside the circle of my own friends, who of course knew the identity of the author in any case by now; so Elinor Glyn I have remained both in public and in private, ever since.

In the New Year *The Visits of Elizabeth* came out in a flat-backed apple-green cover with a white label, and immediately it was seen in stacks in every bookseller's window. The critics were simply delighted with it, and Mr. W. H. Mallock, then a shining light of the literary world, wrote me a charming letter about the book.

Most people were amused by *Elizabeth*. One or two old ladies wrote to the papers and said it was shockingly immoral, but they were answered superbly by a wit who signed

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himself "Toby Belch", and my friends were all delighted with it.

So much success and pleasure regenerated my health and my spirits. I threw away my crutches and, filled with happiness and hope, I prepared to set off with Clayton on a trip to Egypt.

## CHAPTER X

*Egypt under Lord Cromer*

QUEEN VICTORIA died in the January of 1901 and her funeral took place just before we left for Egypt.

Even in the midst of my personal happiness and success it was impossible not to be affected by the general sorrow over the passing of the Queen, and I was deeply moved by her funeral. We had seats in the windows of the Berkeley, and as the long procession passed by, Chopin's Funeral March was played. The three things which struck me most were the tremendous, silent, emotion of the crowd, the fortitude of the gallant old Field-Marshals—some of them in their eighties—who followed the gun-carriage on foot all the way from Buckingham Palace to Paddington, and lastly, as Noel Coward expressed so charmingly in "Cavalcade", the little, little coffin.

This reminder of the smallness, the feminine frailty, of the greatest ruler in the world, brought home to me for the first time the glorious romance of the British Empire, and the greatness of the British race. A sublime spirit of chivalry must be innate in a people whose highest response of loyalty and valour is always made to its Queens. Elizabeth, Anne, Victoria, all were superbly served, both by their Ministers, Admirals, and Generals, and by the rank and file of their troops and public servants.

It was impossible not to sense, in that stately procession, the passing of an epoch, and a great one; a period in which England had been supreme, and had attained to the height of her material wealth and power. There were many who

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wondered, doubted perhaps, whether that greatness could continue ; who read in the failures of the early part of the Boer War a sign of decadence, and, influenced perhaps unduly by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and by my French upbringing, I felt that I was witnessing the funeral procession of England's greatness and glory. I smile now to think how quaintly blind and foolishly old-fashioned I was in my young days, still dominated by the absurdly narrow and stilted philosophy of two centuries before. I did not realize then that the very pessimism and habit of self-depreciation of Englishmen, which so misleads the foreign students of British character, is a symbol of that divine discontent which lies behind all improvement.

The real sign of decadence in a race is not desire for change, for new ideals and standards, but rather the failure to change and grow, the attempt to crystallize institutions, however good, into a strait-jacket, restraining the development of new ideas, and the maintenance of the material standards and ideals of greatness which belong to the past. Had we clung to the old conceptions of value in the new century, in which the only hope of salvation—indeed of survival—lies in the evolution of higher and more spiritual powers than those old, evil, material forces which are now invoked afresh by those who have chosen the easier path of a return to the worship of primitive tribal Gods, and the abandonment of Christian principles—then indeed the star of Britain would have set with the passing of the Victorian era.

But that, thank God, was not our Destiny, though it is only in recent years that I have come to realize this.

It was generally felt that changes must follow the death of the Queen, and the inauguration of a new century, and that new ideas, new standards and new hopes were in the air. But I think that no one then dreamed how rapid, how complete, and in many ways, how terrible would be the transformation. The pace of development of the whole

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world had, it seems, been slowed down for a decade by the failing strength of the little form in the black-draped coffin, and the leisureliness of the 'nineties was really that of a slow-motion picture. In deference to the views of the beloved Empress who symbolized England's nineteenth-century glory, inevitable economic and social changes had been unconsciously held back. The slow progress of that solemn procession marked the passing of that period of repose and security, and of all those things which leisure and security imply—peace, order, confidence, contentment, rest and material well-being on the one hand ; self-satisfaction, blindness, prejudice and stagnation on the other.

Those who enjoy the blessings of such an age are seldom anxious to end it, and I was no exception I am afraid. Self-satisfaction and security may be bad for the soul, but they are very pleasant states for the body and mind, and to awake from them is as painful a matter as being aroused from delightful dreams of summer days to face the cold realities and bleak outlook of a January dawn.

Clayton and I were unconsciously determined not to be thus rudely disturbed from our pleasant self-deceptions, and for the next two winters we were glad to escape from the unattractive environment of gloomy, thoughtful London to the sunny skies—they were very sunny indeed in those days—of Egypt under Lord Cromer.

Here we found that the glorious Victorian tradition still existed in its purest perfection. The fundamental good sense, good humour and good taste, and the wonderful courage and gallantry of the civil and military officials assembled in Cairo in 1901 and 1902, could not, I believe, have been surpassed by any company of men in any country or in any age, and the general standards of social behaviour and morals were maintained at a far higher level than those I had known in either England or France. These men were all real English gentlemen of the old school, filled with the virtues of their type, and too busy and interested in their work to

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give way to its vices. They were one and all “ Ambassadors from Britain’s Crown ”, lesser Cæsars holding sway over the destinies of numbers of native people, and they worked selflessly, and with immense success, for the material and moral good of those whom they ruled and served. The wives of such men, like Cæsar’s wife, should be, and mostly were, above suspicion. Lord Cromer’s sagacious rule ensured not merely the political dominance of the British, but also the maintenance of a stately, dignified, yet gay social life.

What a rule ! What a sage ! What a splendid example of a man ! I shall never forget his quiet sense of humour, and the impression which he gave of calm strength, of everything sane and reasonable. He was reputed in his earlier years to have had an overbearing manner, and curt, superior ways. In my experience, this accusation is levelled against all great men by those who are jealous of their success. Certainly it was not the impression of him which I retained, but rather one of gentleness and courtesy, and of tender devotion to his wife, whom he had recently married. I had a passionate admiration for Lady Cromer, whose stately beauty like that of a Greek goddess was exactly what I thought most perfect and suitable in the wife of this great administrator. In my first description of her in my journal I wrote “ she is not only gracious and sweet, in a reserved way, but I am sure that she is good. What a fortunate woman to be the wife of such a man, and possess his love, as she obviously does ”.

With such a wonderful example before me of the real greatness, not to mention the material success and tangible benefits of the Victorian tradition at its best, I had, I consider, enough excuse for forgetting the dim visions of the need for change recently aroused in me by the thoughts of the Funeral procession in London, and long ago by the sight of the ragged children in Seven Dials. I refused to remember the sufferings of the millions of English workmen and their families, who still starved in the industrial towns to maintain

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England's wealth, and saw only the wonderful prosperity which had been brought to this ancient land by English rule. And by English rule I meant the rule of that particular type of English gentleman whose perfect uncorruptibility is derived from centuries of secure domination, whose moderation, tact and firmness spring from the age-long experience of feudal administration, whose strong sense of justice and fearless devotion to duty is handed down to him from a hundred forebears, each of whom enjoyed the advantages and bore the responsibilities of traditional and unquestioned leadership.

Such men appeared godlike to me, and the system which produced them one which must be maintained at all costs. I genuinely believed that it must be in the true interests of all mankind to preserve for ever, against the encroachments of democracy, the feudal English countryside, where such men are bred. Never before interested in politics, I began to think politically for the first time, and not unnaturally, in Cromer's Egypt, I became a rabid Conservative, and a passionate supporter of British Imperialism.

My rhapsodies about my first view of the country itself, as we travelled from Port Said to Cairo, occupy pages and pages of my journal. The changeless serenity of the East, with its slow-moving camels and dignified, straight-limbed, blue-clad natives, appealed to me intensely, as did the wonderful beauty of the lights and colours, the minarets, the space, the views, and the intense, deep sapphire colour of the Egyptian sky.

On this first visit, in 1901, we only spent a few weeks in Cairo and went on to Naples and Rome at the end of March, but the following year we brought out my mother and the two children and stayed the whole winter; and so I learnt to know more of the delights of this, for me, dream-country, both from the point of view of its amusing social life, and from that of its age-old charm and mystery.

We stayed at the Savoy Hotel, then managed by a remarkable man, George Nuncovich, who was reported to be the



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years before, but had not forgotten, and she understood many things.

The young men in official positions and the smart young officers stationed in Cairo used all to be found at her house. The regiment then was the 11th Hussars. The non-military young men I remember best were Count Gleichen, Mr. (afterwards Sir Eldon) Gorst, Mr. Spring-Rice, Mr. Baird (now Lord Stonehaven), Lord Errington (now Lord Cromer), Mr. Matchel, Lord Monson, and Sir Horace Rumboldt. The French representative, Monsieur Cogordon, was a most interesting man, and the German, de Muller, was the Frenchiest of things German! Monsieur de Muller could never have been taken for anything but a pure Parisian!

The following year there was a little coterie which we called the "Kasr-el-Dubara" because its leaders—Lady Newtown-Butler and Mrs. Coombe—lived in that quarter, and with these added friends we had a most merry time. I remember particularly a big charity ball at which Lady Talbot arranged a set of Lancers in which eight of us were dressed as Romney portraits, and our partners, who were officers of the 11th Hussars, wore Levée dress, with the famous "cherry trousers". Lady Newtown-Butler looked a dream of beauty.

There was a children's fancy dress ball too, at the Residency, to which my two children went in elaborate satin dresses with hooped skirts and powdered hair. Here is a photograph of them, taken the day after the ball! They remember the occasion because the balloons which were given to them were filled with real gas, and when let go they all rose to the ceiling, beyond the reach of even the tallest footman, to the dismay of the kind hostess, who had to promise to send them round to each child next day, when ladders could be brought to collect them from the ceiling.

Prince Mahomet Ali used to give wonderful parties in the Desert to which we were sometimes invited. The tents were silken, the food exotic, and the conversation—lively!

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The Grand Duke Boris of Russia, who visited Egypt for a time in 1902, used to come to them, and added to the gaiety a good deal.

Cecil Rhodes and Dr. Jameson came through Cairo on one occasion, and this is the description which I wrote of them in my journal :

" Rhodes and Dr. Jameson, and those three other men, were together at dinner, and five more ill-shaped creatures I have never seen. Dr. Jameson's back view is like that of an old rat with pink ears and a bald head ! But they are all attractive in spite of it, for one feels the power of their extraordinary brains."

I had a return of ill-health during the second winter in Egypt, due to a fall when diving at the Bath Club the previous summer. I used to get sudden attacks of really terrible pain and had to be given morphia. Then it would go off, but only to return in a few days. I grew extremely thin and white and my poor mother and Clayton were very troubled about me once again.

When I got better, Prince Hussein, afterwards the first King of Egypt, who was a most courtly gentleman, used to invite me to go and rest in the lovely garden round his palace at Gizireh. It was on an island only a few acres in size, but was so cunningly arranged with artificially constructed undulations, that it appeared to stretch for miles. It was a truly amazing garden, like the description of that surrounding the palace of King Suddhodana in *The Light of Asia*, for it was filled with the most exquisite flowers, giant violets, roses, lilies of the valley, and masses of bougainvillea and clematis arranged to hang from tree-trunks ; and all without a single faded bloom. The gardeners worked during the night, and were ordered to remove at once each wilted flower or plant, and to replace it by another, so that no evidence of decay and death should ever be visible in that garden Paradise.

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Small wonder that I recovered rapidly in its enchanted air! And just as the inspiration to write *Elizabeth* had cured me of my rheumatic ills, so my return to health was hastened by a desire which seized me, as I sat in this delicious place, to begin another book. I was filled with an impulse to write, and the idea of the story came to me from imagining what it would have been like to have married the millionaire whom my brother-in-law had so furiously cursed me for refusing, long ago in my first season. In my new book, which I called *The Reflections of Ambrosine*, I described the poor man as "Augustus Gurrage," but really he was not so bad as that!—although some of his relations I described in the book without any exaggeration! The portrait of "Sir Anthony Thornhirst" was so exact that it was recognized at once by all his friends. That Christmas when he went up to Wynyard to stay with the Londonderry's (the late Lord Londonderry told me this story himself!) they had him announced as "Sir Anthony Thornhirst" to see if they could disconcert him, but his whimsical humour was quite equal to the occasion, and out shooting next day he insisted upon having "port, sherry, burgundy and champagne" for lunch, as I made Sir Anthony do to tease Ambrosine at the terribly grand shooting lunch.

Prince Hussein's garden was not the only thing in Cairo in those days which seemed to come straight out of the Arabian Nights. Another intriguing place was the Pink Palace of the wicked old Princess, which was still standing then, although it had been pulled down when I returned to Cairo for a winter in 1920. Marvellous were the tales told about this palace by the Talbot's old dragoman. He had been a servant there when he was a boy in Ismail's time. The houris of the harems used to drive round Gizireh in those days, as they still did in 1902, their beautiful black eyes flashing above a veil of pale pink tulle.

The wicked princess, whose eyes were particularly marvellous, would flash them at any handsome young English-

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Frenchman whom she passed, and if one of them happened to please her, a slave would presently slip a note into his hand, which told him that if he would come to a postern gate in the Pink Palace he would be admitted, and given a sumptuous dinner, and many other joys.

Some went, and were never seen again, but when the Lord Orford of the day (I think it was some time in the 'fifties) was thus invited, he determined to avail himself of this chance of an adventure, but to take a few precautions as well. He was a sailor, and he cunningly hid a knife somewhere about him before presenting himself at the postern door of the Pink Palace.

He was duly admitted, and had the most wonderful banquet with the beautiful-eyed houri, who withheld none of the promised joys ! Later, however, he was put into a weighted sack by slaves and flung down a kind of chute into the Nile. He managed to cut his way out of the sack, however, and swam safely to shore.

Pressure was then brought to bear by the British Government upon Ismail, and the lovely houri was obliged to put an end to her pranks, very possibly, I should imagine, by being forced to descend the same chute as her unfortunate admirers !

So ended the exciting adventures in the Pink Palace. I used to go past it sometimes on the Talbot's yacht, and its closed, shuttered windows always thrilled me. It was exactly like a big pink sugar cake, and so resembled the illustrations of Aladdin's palace that I am grieved to think that it exists no more.

We used to be interested by a striking-looking man, who seemed as if he might have been Grand Vizier to Haroun-al-Raschid, but who was actually an envoy of the Sultan of Turkey, we learnt. He never went out without being followed by two attendants, clad in grey and gold. One of the Foreign Ministers' wives, who was a wit, told me that he had approached her with a request to act as go-between in a

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transaction which he wished to effect, namely to purchase me from my husband to adorn his harem ! He offered quite a nice sum, she said, and Clayton loved the joke, and long afterwards used to threaten me that he would bundle me off to Turkey if I became a bore ! The lady, however, refused to admit that it was nothing but a story, and swore that she really had been approached by the grave-looking Turk !

I have put a full description of the famous Khedive's Ball which we attended into my book *His Hour*, for it was there that I met "Gritzko", whom I made the hero of it. He came to the Ball with the Grand Duke Boris, and behaved just as I described in the book. I think he was the most physically attractive creature whom I have ever met—but I must tell of him in my chapters on Russia.

By far the most wonderful adventure which I had in this enchanted land I have kept to the last, because it is on a totally different plane of experience to the gaieties and interests of everyday life. It was nothing more nor less than a visit to the Sphinx by moonlight, but it had a profound effect upon my whole life.

The party was perfectly composed, and each of the ladies had a sympathetic cavalier. We drove to Mena House along that long road between the pepper trees. In those days there were only about two or three villages of native huts to pass through after leaving Gizireh behind before reaching the open country, with its wonderfully brilliant green crops stretching away on either side of the road. I believe the pure emerald green of the Egyptian rice-fields must be the brightest colour of any growing thing in the world.

There was only one house directly beneath the pyramids on the left-hand side, an old barrack-like building of Ismail's time. On the same side, in the distance, was the Sheik's village of native houses ; Mena House Hotel and a quaint Tower up above it were the only excrescences on the right-hand side. All this had begun to change when I went back

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in 1920, and now there are probably many buildings, but then all was mysterious and solitary. Only the Sphinx, and the vast desert, impressed themselves upon the consciousness of those who gazed, and the experience was unforgettable.

New, deep thoughts and emotions surged up in me as I stared at the strange form. The full moon shed an unearthly light and the luminous sand appeared pink, the shadows indigo, and the sky unbelievably blue. There was not a living human being in view except my companion on his beautiful Arab horse, and the Arab boy who stood motionless by my camel, and seemed to be carved from stone.

The rest of the party had started back, and the usual company of native idlers and donkey-boys had gone with them, to my intense relief. The enjoyment of this vision, undisturbed and unmolested, was, I realized, the unconscious object of my visit to Egypt. The experience was indescribable. I seemed to feel myself become a part of that Immortal Being whom these Ancient Egyptians sought to commemorate in this strange edifice of stone.

I seemed to understand the mysteries of the ages, and to glimpse the true meaning of existence. The importance of the things of this world, for which I still cared so greatly, appeared to fade into insignificance, and a sensation of calm and eternal serenity came over me.

Periodically, in the long years which have passed since that moment, I have experienced similar instants of revelation, but I have never been able to recapture the whole of the wisdom of which I was suddenly possessed in that awesome minute. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life.

It seemed both to my companion and to me as if the Sphinx were gazing towards us, looking straight over our heads into Eternity. We rode back silently through the native village, just as I have described in *His Hour*, but no words can define the lasting effect upon my imagination,

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indeed upon my whole personality, of this moonlight visit to the Sphinx.

A broken nose, hateful tourists, dirty Arabs, banal jokes, nothing can ever really tarnish the superb dignity, the supreme aloofness, the profound mystery of that immortal monument.

## CHAPTER XI

### *An Earnest Discussion of the Theory of Re-incarnation*

I HAD never seriously considered the theory that we have all had previous existences on earth until I visited Pompeii and Paestum, on my way back from my first season in Egypt. I had read little Eastern philosophy at that time, and had not even come across the theosophical literature which was beginning to spread over Europe and America. My first introduction to these ideas was therefore by way of personal experience and came as a complete surprise.

At Pompeii I was obsessed with that peculiar sensation, which is felt by many, of having already been in a place never before visited in this life. The air seemed full of a sensuousness that was so extreme as to be positively sensual ; I detested the expression on the faces of the leering cabmen, and found something Pan-like about the very shapes of the heads and ears of the people in the streets of Naples ; but it was all oddly familiar.

I wondered about this strange feeling, and tried to imagine when I had ever seen any place resembling Pompeii before, and finally I dismissed the whole thing as imagination.

When we visited the Temple of Neptune at Paestum, however, I had a most extraordinary experience, which I can only describe as a vision. Clayton and the others had gone on to prepare our picnic lunch in the shade behind the Temple, leaving me alone for a little while among the stately columns of the inner sanctuary. The lizards basking in the sun were

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my only living companions, yet I saw quite plainly a number of draped figures around me. They were dancing a strange dance, and I longed to join them. The sea seemed to be much closer than it is now, and more of the peculiar, yet familiar, draped figures were approaching from that direction. The extraordinary, pagan, emotions which I remembered feeling when I saw Sarah Bernhardt act the part of Theodora overcame me once more, and I felt almost suffocated with the intensity of my weird, tigerish sensations. In the midst of it all I was conscious of a sense of danger, as if some guardian were bidding me tear myself away from this enchanted ground. At last I was able to make the effort to turn and walk resolutely out of the Temple precincts, and as I went the visions faded and the strange feelings died away. I managed to reach the others, and then collapsed, utterly overcome by my odd experiences. While they lasted, which must have been about five or ten minutes, they were in every way as vivid and real to me as any sights or sensations of ordinary life.

I have had this peculiar feeling of reliving a scene from another age on five other occasions since then, once in Venice, once at Versailles, and three times in Russia, but never so strongly and clearly as this first time at Paestum. I have also met several other people who have had these visions in some degree, and I have read books in which the feelings of reliving the past are described exactly as I felt them. The sensations are vivid, real, and unforgettable, and to call them illusory settles nothing. Why should such a number of otherwise normal people throughout all ages have similar illusions?

The whole range of the difficult problems of epistemology are raised by such an experience as I had at Paestum, and little progress seems to be made towards a solution by merely denying their reality and calling them hallucinations. For what, after all, is the criterion of reality? How may I know that my clear and strongly-felt sensations during such a

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moment are unreal, whereas those evoked by, say, the taste of a certain dish, or the smell of a rose, or the sight of a motor accident, are genuine and trustworthy? It seems to be simpler to assume that some external reality must exist to provide the stimulus for all these sensations, than to attempt to explain how they can be produced in so many people without external stimulus of any kind.

At any rate, that is the conclusion which I reached, after studying the matter as seriously as I could, and after comparing notes with those of my friends who had had similar experiences. In those days there was no modern psychology to provide other solutions, but even after reading, learning (and perhaps failing to digest!) the works of Freud and other psychologists, I still feel perfectly satisfied that these peculiar perceptions are far more easily reconciled with the idea that snatches of memories from previous lives can be recaptured under special circumstances, than with any other theory. I am absolutely convinced that I have lived on earth before, probably many times, and that these moments of unusual vision are due to some special, perhaps temporary, sensitivity to influences from beyond the veil, and are in no sense illusory.

This reliving of the past is not the only form in which I have experienced moments of vision. Very often, particularly in the last twenty years, when I meet strangers for the first time, a picture flashes across my mind which gives me a sudden insight into the past of the person in question, not merely in previous lives, but in this, and I have been able to describe to them quite accurately incidents connected with their lives, or those of others in whom they were especially interested, which I could not possibly have known, just as clairvoyants do. I can only see the visions now and then, but I am sure that they are real, and totally distinct from the ordinary insight into character possessed by every novelist, and also from other types of psychic experience, of which I shall tell later on.

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I have been a good deal laughed at for taking these ideas and impressions seriously, and for my firm belief in re-incarnation, and I realize now that it must have seemed absurd to many people to be told by me perhaps at a party, in front of several other incredulous listeners, that they have lived before in such and such a period, or have had this or that attribute in another life! My sense of humour seems to have been in abeyance during my last years in America, and I must often have seemed ridiculous when I proclaimed the doctrine of re-incarnation to hearers who were not at all in sympathy with the idea.

The belief has meant so much to me, however, and has so completely solved my own philosophic difficulties that I want to set out here, as seriously as I can, some of the arguments which, added to my personal experiences, have convinced me that this life is only one of many earthly existences, for I have found that a real acceptance of this philosophy has removed the pain from most of the sorrows of my life, and has taken away the terrible feelings of urgency, of finality, almost of doom, that used to haunt me long ago.

It is really a very remarkable thing that a belief which is held so firmly by more than half of mankind, and which has been taught by many of the greatest thinkers of all ages, should rarely be so much as considered seriously by modern Western people, for the general basis of the belief seems much more in harmony with Western ideals of justice and reason, and with modern evolutionary theories of development, than with the unprogressive, fatalistic outlook of the East which is its present home. We believe in the evolution of the stellar universe, the solar system, the earth, the animal and vegetable kingdoms ; of the human race, and of our own bodies ; we recognize the development of ideas in art, in science, in literature, and we seek an explanation for every event and situation in a study of that which preceded it. Why, then, should we refuse to entertain the idea that the differentiation of human personalities came about in the same

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way? Why should we adopt an evolutionary basis for the explanation of all diversity save that of the human soul?

I think that a curious confusion of thought lies behind the present refusal of the majority of Western people to consider the idea of re-incarnation at all seriously.

The great exponents of the theory of evolution, as applied to material nature, were definite materialists where philosophy was concerned, and they claimed that the soul did not exist at all, or dubbed it a mere "epiphenomenon". For them, therefore, and for their followers, the idea of re-incarnation could have no meaning, and consistency demanded that they should pour ridicule upon such a belief, and their successors in the materialistic tradition naturally seek to press home their case against the upholders of religious beliefs by ridiculing all forms of religious philosophy, whether evolutionary or any other.

Thus, the supporters of evolutionary ideas in other spheres have not been willing to champion them in the realm of religion.

The upholders of religious thought, on the other hand, have naturally felt a prejudice against the evolutionary ideas derived from their opponents, the materialists, or from "heathen" sources, and have clung to the belief, which they imagine to be the Christian one, in "special creation" of the human soul, even though they have been obliged to abandon it in the realm of natural philosophy.

If all children were born alike as regards the qualities of mind and soul, and if the wide divergencies between the moral character of individuals only appeared as the result of the effects of environment and training, the belief that each human spirit was created anew might perhaps seem reasonable; but no one with any experience of children will attempt for one moment to maintain such an idea. Some of those who are brought up in the best of homes are cunning, cruel, or dishonest, although their brothers and sisters, sharing the same heredity and environment, are entirely normal; while

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the loving unselfishness of many a slum child sprung from and surrounded by vice and disease, shines out like a diamond amidst coal. It seems impossible to deny that the personality of each human being is differentiated from the start, and if this is not the result of an evolutionary process, it must logically be attributed to an act of special creation.

Thus, children are at present brought up to believe by inference, if not by explicit teaching, that, although all things in the Universe have assumed the diverse forms and attributes, both bad and good, which they now possess, as the result of a long process of step-by-step evolution, their own souls—and they are fortunately still taught to believe that they have souls, although often persuaded to deny it later on—have been especially created anew to fit the physical heredity of their bodies, and have no previous history to explain their spiritual and mental peculiarities. The personality of each child, in short, is not attributed to the result of any evolutionary process occurring under his own governance, and for the state of which he can, therefore, be considered to be morally responsible, but only to the whim of Providence. I have never been able to understand how full moral responsibility can be attached to a being who is admittedly imperfect when he comes into the world, but who is not held to be himself responsible for this imperfection. “If God expected us to be good, why didn’t He make us good?” I used to say in my rebellious childhood, and I believe this fundamental difficulty was at the bottom of my original objections to orthodox Christian teaching.

Some religious people, who nominally accept the idea of special creation where souls are concerned, but who dislike attributing imperfect creations to God, attempt to explain the peculiarities of individuals in terms of physical heredity and environment, without, apparently, seeing that the only possible conclusion to be drawn from such a theory is the completely deterministic one adopted by the logical materialists. There can be no moral responsibility in a world in

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which personal character and behaviour are determined by the chance physical reactions of the chemical ingredients of genes and hormones. For me such theories appear fantastic to the point of absurdity, apart from their bearing upon the problem of free will. It is scarcely possible to conceive, much less to maintain the theory that a microscopic speck of primeval jelly could have so complex a chemical structure that its automatic reactions would be capable of giving rise, not merely to the elaborate and marvellous body of a human being ; not merely to the glandular secretions which are, upon most insufficient evidence, claimed to govern his behaviour and mental outlook from birth to death ; but that it should also be capable of dividing itself up, in specified proportions, in such a way as to control, still automatically, *the form and behaviour of all his descendants through a hundred million years!* How much less tiring it seems to believe that the diverse human personalities are distinct entities which have themselves evolved through many incarnations, and have achieved their present peculiarities by the exercise of free will in the choice of their activities in each life, as we see them doing in this one. Full moral responsibility for existing character can thus, and thus only, as far as I can see, be maintained. The theory of reincarnation explains hereditary and family resemblances as the result, rather than the cause of similarity of character, and as being due to similarity of experience throughout the ages by the individuals concerned, since it is natural to imagine that groups of souls remain attached to each other, and re-incarnate together.

For me, there is something fundamentally irreligious in the idea that so amazing a miracle as the creation of a human soul should depend for its occurrence upon the whim of a pair of earthly lovers, or worse, upon the accident of a faulty contraceptive appliance. Nor can I endure the thought of a Creator capable of producing, deliberately, and not as the result of the abuse by man of the divine gift of Free Will, the distorted characters of such human monsters as Caligula

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or Tamerlane. I prefer to believe that all human spirits were perfectly created in the Image of God in the beginning of Time, and have developed gradually towards evil or good of their own volition, having reached their present degree of perfection or degeneration by stages, just as have the beautiful and perfect, or ugly and defective, forms of the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

The advance of civilization supplies another argument against the belief in the special creation of every new individual. Not only is each human being separate and distinct from all the rest from his very birth, but so also are the individuals of each generation born distinct and different from their fathers. It is fashionable to pretend that human nature does not change, but no student of history can really support this view. The cruelties and inequalities and horrors of modern times may be great, but it is hypocrisy to maintain that things were not infinitely worse in bygone days. We do not crucify our thieves and mutilate our prisoners, nor are slaves flogged to death and children left starving in the streets, in modern Christian States, as was the normal condition of affairs in historic times. If pre-existence is to be denied, this moral evolution of humanity must presumably be attributed to a steady improvement in the quality of the souls created, an unsatisfying and fatalistic idea which seems to rob man of all credit for his hard-won moral improvement, and to raise irreverent questions concerning this delay in the production of perfected human types.

The most obvious argument in favour of a belief in pre-existence comes from the question, "Why should some people have better health and endowments, a happier environment, or an easier passage through life than others? Why should some be endowed with every gift and others be deformed or half-witted?" The craving which we feel for justice makes the inequality of birth and environment seem inexplicable if pre-existence is denied. No amount of belief in reward and punishment after death can provide an ex-

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planation for the inequality of fortune, health and opportunity during life. The belief that your fate in this life is directly derived from your own actions in a previous one is also a splendid antidote for that greatest of all temptations and follies—self-pity.

The Eastern religions postulate a law of Karma, or debt-repayment, which operates to ensure that the moral debts incurred by each individual shall be duly repaid in later incarnations if not in this, and the inequalities of endowment and opportunity are considered to be the effect of the working of this law ; but the version of this belief which finds its way into current Western thought is very crude, and the idea of Karma seems to most people to be merely a cruel form of inescapable automatic revenge, very unattractive to those accustomed to the beautiful promises of forgiveness and redemption contained in the New Testament. The conception of Karmic Law in my philosophy is very far from the idea of retribution. It is concerned rather with the adjustment, or re-adjustment, of the relations between one individual and another, than with punishment of any kind. Debts incurred towards each other have to be paid as long as payment is demanded by those whom we have wronged, but the idea of retribution is inconceivable to me in connection with our relations to God.

Difficulties may follow as the obvious results of foolish actions, and pain and trouble may be sent to provide enlightenment—they have often done so for me—but the hard experiences which sometimes seem to be the lot of quite good people are not sent to punish, but only to emancipate from earthly desires and tendencies. They provide an opportunity for voluntary self-sacrifice, that godlike offering of love which takes away the multitude of sins. The capacity to suffer as a result of self-sacrifice can never be associated with retribution, since it is, like mercy, an attribute of God Himself and has been recognized as such by all religions. An over-simplified conception of the Law of Karma, which

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does not recognize these distinctions, and which attempts to link sin and suffering in too direct a way is quite unsatisfying, and may be the reason why many, who believe that this is the essence of the re-incarnation theory, find it repulsive rather than comforting.

I believe that repentance and forgiving charity can in any case remove the burden of the Karmic debts we owe, as we are promised in the Lord's Prayer.

The phrase "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*" is a hard one for ordinary ways of thought, and in the old days I used to rebel at the seeming sternness of the injunction that bids us pray for forgiveness only in the proportion that we are able to forgive others, for the standard seems almost unattainable in a single life for those who have been deeply wronged and have much to forgive. Many hitherto good people develop petty hatreds in their old age which, if this life is the only one, would seem to debar them from forgiveness of their own transgressions. The phrase ceases to appear hard in the light of the re-incarnation theory, and becomes instead a source of deep enlightenment as to the way in which we may at any moment throw away the burden of our own Karmic debts merely by ceasing to desire the repayment of those debts which others owe to us.

To me there appears to be a close affinity between the belief in re-incarnation and the New Testament teaching, and in fact there are many parts of the Gospels which I have only begun to understand since I have believed in earthly pre-existence. Yet it is a curious fact that the taboo against re-incarnational philosophies amongst Christian peoples has its real origin in the belief that such a clear solution of many problems is in some way opposed to the teaching of Christianity. It is usually imagined that such an idea conflicts with the official doctrines concerning Purgatory, the Second Coming, and the Day of Judgment, and that in any case it forms no part of the Gospel teaching, and can therefore be of small concern to the sincere Christian. This view was set forth

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explicitly by Mr. E. F. Benson in an article on Re-incarnation in a Sunday newspaper not long ago. "Nowhere in the whole of His teaching is it so much as hinted at," he wrote, and added, "not only did He never allude to it, but His teaching is not reconcilable with the belief."

This is an astonishing statement to make, for there are many passages in the Gospels which seem to me to teach the doctrine most distinctly, and which are incomprehensible on any other basis but that of an accepted belief in earthly pre-existence and re-incarnation.

What interpretation can be put on Matthew xi. 8, 14 and 15, and xvii. 10-13, other than that St. John the Baptist should be considered as the re-incarnation of Elias? "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." That this is actually the meaning which it was intended to convey is confirmed in the discourse after the Transfiguration. "And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. . . . Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." The same passage occurs in Mark ix. 11-13.

When it is remembered that the doctrine of re-incarnation was commonly held at the time, it is easy to understand why no more explicit statement of the idea was required; had it been contrary to Christian teaching it would surely have been expressly condemned. Yet in Matthew xvi. 13-14 occurs another remarkable passage:

"Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets." No rebuke was uttered for the expression of these obviously re-incarnational ideas; indeed the very question which follows

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"Whom do ye say that I am?" stresses the point that a nameable past personality may be identified with an existing one.

The belief in a Day of Judgment in no way conflicts with belief in re-incarnation. The work of several terms may precede an examination, and the fitness or otherwise of the student on the critical day is the result of long preparation. It seems natural to believe that the series of incarnations will end in a definite judgment at an appointed time, after all have had ample opportunity for development and reform, but difficult to imagine how judgment can be passed upon a babe that has not lived a day, or a madman who has spent half a century in violent outbursts of uncontrollable insanity.

The early Christians evidently interpreted the Second Coming in an immediate sense, taking the announcement that, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1, and John xxi. 23) to refer to the Second Coming, instead of to Pentecost. Christianity thus inherited a mood of impatient expectancy, quite unwarranted by the actual prophecies, and this sense of immediate finality may be responsible for the impression that there is no time for repeated incarnations. There is, in fact, no suggestion in the Gospels that the Day of Judgment is near at hand. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). Yet all the passages which describe the physical signs and wonders which are to precede the Second Coming end with the phrase, "All these things shall come upon this generation" (Matthew xxiii. 36 and xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32). Interpreted in terms of a single incarnation this last prophecy has clearly failed, as the opponents of Christianity have eagerly pointed out. In a future incarnation of that generation, however, they may still be fulfilled.

So with the belief in Purgatory and Paradise. There is

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no antithesis between these conceptions and the Theory of Re-incarnation which refers to earthly lives, and says nothing of the conditions of existence between death and rebirth, during which the human spirit must be refined, perhaps by fire, before ascending to higher realms from which to gather strength for a renewed plunge into the heavy material world. There is ample room for a spiritual purgatory and paradise between the pages of the book of earthly incarnation.

If I am labouring all these points too greatly, I crave indulgence for a sincere though utterly inadequate attempt to expound a doctrine which embodies my deepest convictions, but which I have found is seldom treated seriously or given any real consideration by English-speaking people, to their grievous loss.

To those who share with me a vivid joy in life and love as they are found on earth, and who have known the horror of the terrible word "Nevermore", which the Raven of Death croaks so dismally in our ears at intervals throughout our lives, I dedicate this chapter.

CHAPTER XII

*The Writing of "Three Weeks"*

AFTER being so serious in the last chapter, I feel that I must begin this one with the tale of an adventure which we had in Naples on the way home from Egypt, and which makes me laugh when I remember it even now.

A great liner was late leaving Naples, so that our rooms at the hotel had not been vacated when we arrived. Every bedroom and all the *salons* were already full of furious passengers for the delayed boat, and we were told that there was not a bed to be had in the whole city. We were dead tired from a delay in the train journey at Fogia. What was to be done?

We were travelling with a dear old American, whose sagacious valet had rushed on in front of everyone and secured, by bribery and corruption, the "Royal" *salon*, in which there had been placed two brass beds, in addition to the hard gilt sofas and armchairs. It was enormous and high, and had crimson plush curtains. The kind man offered to share it with us, and we accepted gratefully. The entire party, it appeared, must sleep there or go into the street!

After dinner, my maid and I went up first and undressed, and I got into one of the single beds with my maid beside me. She was a splendid woman named Williams, of the type of the perfect Victorian servant, and was much distressed at causing any inconvenience by her presence. She was so very respectful, and lay so near the edge, poor thing, that she later fell out on to the floor!

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Then in came our American friend and my husband. They undressed behind a screen, and Clayton, in his dressing-gown, camped on a sofa, while the old American climbed into the bed next to mine, and the prim English valet sat bolt upright in a crimson plush chair, only undoing his collar.

Broad paths of light came through the Venetian slat blinds, enabling us to see everything ! I was so quaking with laughter at the situation that I could not go to sleep, and after awhile I sat up a little to stretch and get some air. Then, to my horror, I caught sight of our American friend, propped upon his thin elbows in his lonely bed, watching me with devouring eyes. "Oh ! my God, what a form !" he cried, in a stifled voice, and ducked under the clothes. I was obliged to duck too, to prevent myself from bursting into peals of audible mirth.

Then the valet began to snore. No sleep for anyone until his master roared at him. Then at last we closed our eyes, but only until Williams fell out of bed, with such a thump that the valet sprang from his chair, believing we were being burgled. Mr. C. A. also jumped from his bed, clad in an old-fashioned silk nightgown—not a romantic figure—and Clayton roused himself, with dignity, and asked plaintively what was the matter ? Poor Williams was helped up by the chivalrous American and climbed in beside me again, dreadfully confused.

The old boy then returned to his bed next to me, and I hoped that all would be well, but he kept murmuring passionate love words to himself at intervals all the rest of the night. Each time I woke and peeped out I saw Clayton peacefully unconscious on his sofa, the valet dozing with his mouth open, Williams also, but Mr. C. A. still in his previous position, propped up on his elbows, devouring me with wobbly eyes !

When I told Clayton about it next day he was quite peevish. "Old fool," he said, "bothering about women when we were all so tired" !

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When we arrived in Rome we encountered many old friends, and were swept into a vortex of gaiety. There was a grand Austro-Italian wedding, I remember, between an Austrian Prince and Princess Frasso, and I was delighted with the gay ceremonial. The splendid fur-trimmed garments of the Hungarian magnates who attended in their robes stayed in my memory. I felt that Hungary must be a land of romance, and I determined to go there one day. My wish was not granted till thirty years later, but my pleasant anticipations were amply fulfilled when at last I was able to visit that delightful country in 1931.

I had a recurrence of the mysterious pain in my side while I was in Rome, and my husband took me to see Dr. Munthe, then renowned as a great physician, but now far more famous as the author of *The Story of San Michele*. He had a very magnetic—one might almost say hypnotic—personality, and I was much interested in him. He was quite young still in 1902, and wore a soft, close-cut beard, and very peculiar spectacles. The lenses were so immensely thick that it was impossible to see the colour or expression of his eyes, and thus he produced in me that rather uncanny sensation of being watched by someone unseen. He was clever and delightful to talk to, and showed a kindly but contemptuous tolerance towards the silly society women who thronged round him and did not attempt to conceal their devotion. The peasants at Capri simply worshipped him, I am told, and he had numbers of grateful patients of all classes. He had a fine sense of humour, and his descriptions of things and people were always whimsical. I should imagine that he was a man with a lonely soul, seeking for greater things than he could find, either in his surroundings or in himself. He was more than kind to me, and helped me to get well.

Another person who interested me in Rome was Waldo Story, the sculptor. He made a bust of me, and we met many charming people at the delightful apartment in the Palazzo Barbarrini where he and Mrs. Story lived.

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My journal is full of descriptions of the great palaces and grand manner of life of the Italian nobles. We went to numbers of parties and on motoring excursions to Viterbo and Orvietto, with the American Ambassador, Mr. Meyer, perched up in his ridiculous little open, noisy machine. It was a twelve-horse-power Panhard and was considered the very newest and most marvellous possession. We wore enormous flat hats made like a man's tweed cap, which were called "motor caps". They were perched on the top of an edifice of hair, and tied on with voluminous chiffon veils, which, however, failed to achieve their object of keeping on our strange headgear, for we had to hold it on with our hands whenever the Panhard exhibited its superiority over the horse with regard to speed! The Italian peasants in the villages through which we passed were sometimes quite hostile to these new iron monsters, and shook their fists at us as we went by.

Among the many amusing English people in Rome at that time was Lord Grey, afterwards Governor-General of Canada, a most intelligent and charming person. He joined us on many of our excursions, and used to expound the beauties of Roman art and architecture to me. He told me the stories of Hadrian's Villa, Frascatti and Villa d'Este, and in fact did a good deal to complete my education about things Roman, hitherto limited entirely to the information contained in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. Clayton laughed at my rhapsodies over the buildings and the views, as he had in Venice, and used to wave his hand at us and say, "For goodness' sake go and get your ebullitions over while I order lunch!"

There was a certain rather fierce young attaché at one of the embassies who thought he was madly in love with me. He confided this to Clayton, who was most sympathetic. The ardour of my admirers always amused him extremely. On one of our picnics to the Villa d'Este, this young man flew into a furious rage of jealousy because I had gone on with

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Lord Grey, and had not waited for him. Clayton tried to reassure him, and said :

"Don't upset yourself, my dear fellow, it is only one of Elinor's antiques!"

"*Cela n'empêche pas!*" the furious young man almost shouted !

Yes! in the brave old days we had our vicissitudes—but they were rather amusing ones!

We went on from Rome to Lucerne, leaving the merry party of "antiques" and youthful admirers behind us. I had never been to Switzerland before, and I was overcome with the beauty of the views, the snow peaks against the sky, the deep blue lakes and the vivid green of the young beech-leaves with the sun on them. The setting was ideally romantic, but Clayton only laughed at my "spring fancies", as he called them, and I think that my excitement over the scenery must have bored him a good deal. At any rate I felt much aggrieved at his want of sympathy with my feelings, and as before I flew to my journal for comfort, and wrote detailed descriptions of love-scenes with an imaginary lover in this idyllic setting. All this I afterwards put into *Three Weeks*, and thus earned my title among prudes and Puritans of a dreadfully "immoral" woman! If only I had listened to the entreaties of the enthusiastic attaché, or of one of my other charming admirers, perhaps I might have enjoyed the company of a sympathetic companion during my stay in Switzerland, and thus have avoided the loneliness which led me to write so vividly of a dream-lover. How odd it is that real immorality might have preserved my public character, without even losing my private one, for I am sure that Clayton would not have given me away. He was far too generous a character even to play the part of a dog in the manger, and I think my faithfulness was almost an embarrassment to him.

One day it rained, and we came as near to a quarrel as his wonderful sense of humour would allow. Under the hotel

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was a fur shop, in which was hanging a magnificent tiger skin. I had always longed to have one, but Clayton would never give me this present, as he said that I was too like the creatures anyway ! That morning I received a large cheque on account of the royalties earned by *Elizabeth*, which was selling well, so I had plenty of money of my own, and temptation overcame me. I crept down to the shop and asked the price of the skin. The man saw my absurd eagerness and, guessing my ignorance about money matters, named a fabulous sum. Undeterred, I bought it, and had it sent up to our sitting-room in the Hotel National. As soon as it came I stretched it out on the floor and lay on it and caressed its fur, looking, I imagine, much as my caricaturists have portrayed me ever since.

Instead of being impressed with my charms Clayton laughed so heartily at me that I was snubbed and never reclined on tigers again (though I have now been presented by various admirers—one quite unknown—with seven other skins) and I did it on this occasion solely to tease my lawful husband ! My sin of disobedience in ever buying the lovely creature deserved punishment, no doubt, but the merciless fate which seems to have decreed that the name Elinor Glyn shall for ever be coupled with the picture of a woman lying on a tiger-skin seems almost too like the imaginations of Dante.

We had to get a special trunk for the creature, and Clayton was really furious about it, poor man, and with reason ! He said it was bad enough to have to travel with a woman who had thirty-seven new dresses, a train of antique admirers, and a maid who fell out of bed, but to have a huge tiger-skin as well was more than an Englishman could stand !

How I feel for him, when I look back on it now !

The truth is that the origin of the story I entitled *Three Weeks* is to be found in the reactions following upon this trip to Switzerland in 1902, following in its turn upon the unsatisfied longings for a sympathetic companion which I

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had experienced in Venice some years earlier. Actually the book was not written in its entirety until four years later, but in the meantime my romantic soul constantly sought in flights of unfettered imagination an escape from the limitations and deprivations of my married life, and *Three Weeks* was the product.

My head was a little turned, perhaps, by the amount of admiration which almost all men except my husband gave me at that time, and by the success of my books, and my romantic temperament craved for a lover who would pay me the homage which, remembering Tennyson's lines, I thought was every woman's due. Dr. Munthe told me afterwards that his short description of me in his case-book was "The syren". The only time that I had played this part was on my honeymoon! But I suppose that there was enough of the syren in my nature to make it difficult for me to accept the rôle which Clayton now allotted to me, without fierce rebellion outwardly controlled, and venting itself in the passionate writings which later stirred the world. My imagination was roused to the worship of Love not by possession of its joys, but by a longing for them.

In July the agony in my side returned, and following Dr. Munthe's advice, Clayton sent me to Carlsbad to see whether the cure would do me any good. The cure did do me a great deal of good, and I ceased to have the really terrible attacks of pain which had been my constant dread for over a year. In spite of rather severe illness and pain during the first part of the cure, I enjoyed this visit immensely and I have always loved the place and have returned there very often, to drink the waters, perhaps, or else to dream dreams in the still, beautiful pinewoods. In any case to restore my mental and physical health and my sense of balance and of humour. I have met three of the greatest friends of my life, and many delightful acquaintances there.

On this first visit I was introduced to and instantly loved two dear people, Sir Francis and Lady Jeune (he was after-

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wards Lord St. Helier). Their kindness to me was beyond words, both while I was there, and later, when I used often to stay with them in London, and breathe the air of the wonderfully intelligent society which centred round their house.

Sir Francis was the greatest classical scholar I have ever met, and in our slow walks in the woods he awakened again all my old passion for Greek art and literature, and taught me to regulate all that I had already learnt and to discover the importance of a sense of values, which I had not appreciated until then. He trained my critical faculties, and led my mind into new channels and to the discovery of fresh interests.

I finished writing *The Reflections of Ambrosine* at Carlsbad, and Sir Francis and Lady Jeune and Sir Gilbert Parker, who was there also, read it and liked it. Their encouragement and sympathy led me to take my talent for writing more seriously, and to consider myself destined to become a real "author". Up till then I had written purely for my own amusement. Sir Francis urged me not to mind criticism, or accusations of immorality, but to go straight on, and never to be influenced by any considerations whatever but the desire to tell the truth as I saw it. He liked the style of *Elizabeth* and *Ambrosine*, but urged me to take more trouble over the actual grammar and wording of my books, even when written in diary form.

How I wish that I had been able always to follow this excellent advice! I am bitterly aware that I have seldom done full justice to my literary talent in my books, and that my "cursed facility" as Lord Curzon used to call it, has robbed me of the serious consideration of literary people which I once possessed.

Perhaps there are some excuses for this which are not always remembered by my critics, a strangely limited education, periods of bad health, and constant financial pressure to pay my husband's debts and provide for him and for my mother and children, amongst them; perhaps also I have had to face more bitter criticism and hostility on other than

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literary grounds than most other writers. In the first place, I was almost the first society woman to become a novelist, and this was an innovation not well looked upon either by my friends, or by the general body of literary critics of that date. For a lady to write novels was considered, in those days, only a little less degrading than for her to go on the stage.

I am afraid that under the influence of my very Conservative friends I always opposed the giving of the vote to women, but I realize now that without knowing it I was in fact a member of the band of pioneers in the cause of feminine emancipation who laboured so earnestly—almost too successfully it seems—to free the souls and bodies of women from the heavy age-old trammels of custom and convention. My lot was cast in that particularly stubborn and thorny sector represented by the "high society" of England, France, and America. The fate of a social pioneer is not in any event wholly enviable, and when I added to it the terrible audacity of being the first writer to dare openly to glorify the joys of earthly love, it is small wonder that my path became a difficult one. The debt I owe to the many wonderful friends who have stood by me throughout my many trials and vicissitudes is immense, and I am truly grateful.

One of my great consolations is the thought that in thus fulfilling what was presumably my destiny, and in producing, sometimes from choice, but sometimes from necessity, a considerable number of novels, faulty and ungrammatical as no doubt some of them were, I have apparently given a good deal of happiness to a large number of people in all parts of the world; at least so it would seem if one may judge from the number of grateful letters which I have received from men and women of all classes, and from many countries. I drew, out of my vivid imagination, material to satisfy my own unfulfilled longing for romantic love, and so, out of my own poverty, I was able to provide the riches of imaginary fulfilment and pour them out into the love-starved lives of thousands of others whom I did not know. So that even if my

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conscience tells me that I have not always succeeded in maintaining my highest standards of literary art, I have still the comfort of knowing that the million-copy popular edition of my books which was published in 1917 helped to keep up the spirits of the lonely wives and sweethearts of those terrible days, and I am content that this thought should be my only memorial.

One other claim I make in mitigation of my offences against my literary Muse. I have never in any of my books misled my readers with untrue descriptions of imaginary places and people. Every picture which I have painted of the sights and ways of other countries and people, or of society life, has been a faithful portrayal of the manners and customs which I have myself observed, set down, as far as I am aware, without exaggeration or distortion, and the great majority of the characters in my books are drawn from life. The background of the love stories presents a true picture of the changes from year to year in the fashions and ideas of *Le monde ou l'on s'amuse*. This has always been appreciated by the people in the countries I have visited and described, and accounts, I suppose, for the wonderfully kind invitations which I have had from leading people in almost every European state, and from all parts of America both North and South, to visit them and write descriptions of their country. Although not, perhaps, as well known in England as some of my other books, I think that the pictures of pre-War America given in *Elizabeth Visits America*, of Imperial Russia in *His Hour*, of Royal Spain in *Letters from Spain*, and of post-war Hungary in *Love's Hour*, are amongst the best work I have done.

Actually the most perfect offering which I ever made to my Muse was, I believe, a slim volume of satirical allegories called *The Damsel and the Sage*, which I wrote at Carlsbad the year after I first went there. My friend Minnie Paget was with me, and Lord Milner was there then too ; very tired and overworked after his exertions in South Africa. I grew to

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know him well during those weeks while we both took the cure, and his great love for the Classics was a bond of friendship. We talked of nothing but the Greek poets and philosophers as we walked in the woods. I always thought he must be the re-incarnation of Socrates! However that may be, his company inspired me to write this little volume of biting but subtle satire. It had a great success in those long-ago days, for many a man, tired of the vagaries of his lady friends, gave them a copy as a salutary lesson, while women indignant over the fickleness of their *chers amis*, underlined certain passages and sent the book to them as a birthday present!

In 1903 Europe was shocked by the assassination of Queen Draga of Servia, for no murder of a Queen had occurred since the execution of Marie Antoinette. I was much impressed by the dramatic possibilities of the story, and began to weave imaginary plots in which the murder of a Balkan Queen would form the climax.

In 1906 I went to stay with the Kintores at a most romantic old castle of theirs near Glamis. After a wet and abortive day spent in cajoling recalcitrant salmon, we sat round the fire after tea and I was asked to amuse the party with a story.

A handsome young man in a velvet smoking-suit was sprawling on a rug before the fire playing with his rough-haired terrier. He was the usual type of the young Englishmen of the upper classes in those days, and unknown in any other country or period; a typical product of Eton and Oxford, endowed with a splendid physique, personal charm and innate good qualities of the highest order, but intellectually and emotionally sound asleep.

I found myself wondering what such a young man might become if a really attractive woman who knew the world crossed his path. Suddenly it flashed into my mind that here was the ideal hero for the novel based on the murder of Queen Draga which I had been weaving, and I told the story

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of *Three Weeks* as we sat there round the fire. My imagination was fired, and I returned to Essex full of a desire to write the story as a book. Thoughts seemed to flow into my head as though a force from beyond was putting them there. All the wild imaginations I had written in Venice and Lucerne were poured out upon paper in a torrent of words which I could scarcely control. In six weeks the book was finished.

I felt every word that I wrote most intensely. I saw again the glorious views at Lucerne and the stately palaces of Venice ; I seemed actually to hear the voices of Paul and the Lady, and when I wrote the scene after her death when Paul sees the gypsy van with the woman whom he had passed before, so happy with her baby, now changed and bitter and degraded by her grief, I found the tears trickling down my cheeks. The book meant everything to me ; it was the outpouring of my whole nature, romantic, proud, and passionate, but for ever repressed in real life by the barriers of custom and tradition, and held fast behind the iron mask of self-respect and self-control which had, perhaps fortunately, been locked round my throat by Grandmamma in Canada long years before. The writing of *Three Weeks* was the echo of the day when I saw Sarah Bernhardt in "Theodora" ; of the lonely nights in Venice and Lucerne ; of the Egyptian desert and the eternal message of the Sphinx ; and of all the dreams of love and romance which had occupied my mind throughout my youth.

When it was finished I used to sit and stare for hours into the fire in a kind of trance. There was no detail that I could not visualize ; no emotion that I did not feel.

An old Scottish Professor of the History of Religions came to stay with us not long after *Three Weeks* was published, early in 1907. He had heard the philistine view that it was a very bad book, and was prepared to chide me for writing it. I gave him a copy of the book, which, like most of my critics, he had never seen. He sat there in my sitting-room and read and read, forgetting even to come down for lunch, and when

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I returned to the room at about four o'clock he had finished reading, and was sitting with his head in his hands, crying like a child.

"Lassie," he said, "I'm ashamed of my thoughts on it yesterday. Posterity will justify you."

I cried too, with sheer joy that this stern old man had understood.

## CHAPTER XIII

*Elizabeth Visits America*

I NEVER for a moment imagined that *Three Weeks* would cause such a stir. It seems almost incredible now that it should have been thought so highly improper! When one looks into the modern novels which deal with the facts of nature in sophisticated settings, unrelieved by romance or self-sacrifice or idealism of any kind, and in which every detail is described minutely and in the coarsest possible way, the idea that anyone could be shocked by reading *Three Weeks* seems quite preposterous. It is a curious commentary upon the stupendous hypocrisy of the Edwardian age that although it was secretly considered quite normal in society circles for a married woman to have a succession of illicit love affairs, during the intervals of which, if not simultaneously, intimate relations with her husband were resumed, yet a novel in which an exotic foreign character is depicted in the throes of a single passionate romance, for which she pays willingly with her life, should be condemned as highly immoral. Not even the tragic form of the story, nor the fact that it dealt with an unusual, Slavonic type of woman, and did not pretend to lay down a model for the behaviour of an English schoolgirl, seemed to weigh with the people who were determined to label it a "bad" book. Few read it in the beginning, but hundreds passed on this verdict, so that when at last it was bought in its thousands, no reader began it with an open mind. To this day people come up to me and say with a knowing wink "Oh! I read your book *Three Weeks* when I was fifteen. I had to keep it under my pillow though!"

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I believe that not more than half those who read it can have finished the book ; they put it down after the death of the Lady, as unlikely to contain any more thrills, and did not trouble to go on to the end, where the underlying moral of the story is made plain in the gradual regeneration of Paul, the full development of whose character is achieved only when, through loss and suffering, all debts are paid at last.

*Three Weeks* was quickly translated into almost all European languages. Abroad it was treated seriously, as a great tragedy, and no suggestions that it was "improper" were ever made. In England, I shudder now to think what a storm of abuse the book raised. The Headmaster of a great Public School, while admitting that he had never read it, wrote to curse me, in all seriousness, for having written it. His letter began "Madam" ; but at the end of our correspondence he was human enough to write to me as "My dear Mrs. Glyn", and to admit that having now read the book, he realized that he had been misled by rumour about it. He later wrote to me again, commenting kindly on my book *Halcyone*.

I can never tell of the wonderful way in which my friends stood by me and defended me against so many bitter attacks. I had never suspected that many of them were such kind and loyal supporters, and this experience changed my views about very many people. I have kept amongst my treasures the wonderful letters which I received at this time, particularly those of dear Minnie Paget, Mary, Duchess of Abercorn, and Lord Milner. No one whose opinion I valued believed that my purpose in writing the book was ignoble, but in the outside world I suppose few pages have ever been penned which caused so much bitter controversy.

*Three Weeks* appeared in America about three months after it was published in England, and there it raised the same storm. I had always wanted to visit "God's own Country", and when a well-known American hostess, Mrs. Kate Moore, with whom I stayed in Paris that year, suggested that I should

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go there for a trip, and she and Minnie Paget kindly promised they would give me plenty of introductions to their friends, I decided to follow this advice, instead of accompanying Clayton and the children on a trip round the world, which had been planned for the following spring. I paid for my mother and for the children's governess, Miss Dixon, a beloved friend, to go to Ceylon and Japan with the family instead of me, the idea being for them all to join me in San Francisco on the way home from Japan, and for us to return across America together. Actually there was some trouble about accommodation on the boats across the Pacific when the time came, and Clayton decided to return by way of the Siberian Railway, so we never met in America after all.

I felt very excited as I stepped on to the steamer! I had a friend on board, Consuelo, Duchess of Manchester, that most fascinating and clever American lady who was a member of King Edward and Queen Alexandra's inner circle. But nevertheless it seemed a very big adventure to be thus travelling about by myself, in the rôle of "Elinor Glyn the famous authoress", instead of in the company of my husband as the rather timid, peculiar-looking wife of the well-known traveller, Clayton Glyn! I felt independent and gay, as in the long-ago days when I had visited my French relations, and the merry spirit of *Elizabeth* dominated me, rather than the tragic one of *Three Weeks*. I was determined to have plenty of fun, and to take nothing too seriously.

Until that moment I had been merely a private person, who happened to write books when she felt inclined; I had only been interviewed once or twice, and thought it a really funny idea that anyone reading the papers would be interested to hear about me. I knew no literary people, except Mr. Jayes, and Mr. Mallock and Mr. Mason whom I had met at the Jeunes. Of the methods of the American press I had not the slightest idea.

Madame Ysnaga, the Duchess of Manchester's mother, a most delightful and witty old Southern lady, warned me on

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the ship that I should receive a surprise on arrival, and indeed I did! Reporters boarded the boat and overwhelmed me with questions as soon as the tender came alongside, and I was photographed and interviewed again on the docks, and with difficulty reached the Plaza Hotel where we were all going to stay. It appeared that the most fantastic stories had been printed while we were yet at sea. I myself was the heroine of *Three Weeks*, it was said, and one paper even published a number of names (derived from the "Peerage", I imagine) of probable "Pauls". This avalanche so confused me that I fear I had no sensible answers ready to the usual pertinent questions: "What did I think of America? What were my views on American divorce? How long was I going to stay? What had I come for? Would I tell the struggles of my early life? How did I react to the change from obscurity to fame?"

They were all so kind and so eager, and I felt so friendly that after I realized that they were not merely pulling my leg I tried hard to answer seriously. Whether it was on account of this good first impression that I have always been shown such kindness by the American press, I do not know, but for some reason I have never had to endure such biting, personal, newspaper attacks in the States as I have in England, although I was certainly presented in the rôle of an absolutely fantastic "hour!"

I was properly impressed with the tall buildings, only a comparatively small number in those days, and none so immensely high as now, but still very imposing. Everything about New York seemed to me to be filled with vitality. I remember being struck by the curiously strong national characteristics which seemed to have emerged, or rather to have been super-imposed upon every American citizen, no matter what his or her original nationality. Whether their descent is from Anglo-Saxon, or Greek, or German, or Jew, it is impossible not to recognize as "Americans" those who have lived long in the United States. The impression I had

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at first, although I lost it later, was that there was a faint look of the Red Indian about most of the people. Perhaps this is due to the effect of climate, and that the dry air of the country is responsible for the peculiar, intense expression on the faces.

Mrs. Fritz Ponsonby (now Lady Ponsonby), the Duchess and I went down to stay with Mrs. Frederick Vanderbilt, at Hyde Park, on the Hudson, not long after our arrival in New York. I was so interested in the very "democratic" behaviour of the porters in the station (in those days they were not all coloured men as they are now—a great improvement where manners are concerned!), and I was amazed at the way we all had to trundle along to a long coach where we sat together with all sorts of weird people. After the luxury and exclusiveness always provided for me when travelling with Clayton, I am afraid I noticed discomforts of this kind unduly. The art of securing all the amenities of life in full measure for which New York is now so famous was not very far advanced in the Autumn of 1907. The shop assistants and waiters were nearly all rude, even insolent, in those days, hardly troubling to serve their customers, and making every small service appear to be a great favour. This elementary phase began to change soon after this, and even by 1911 the standard of manners in shops and restaurants had greatly improved. When I left America in 1929 the clever flattery of the average saleswoman surpassed even that of her Paris counterpart! They had realized that rudeness was not good for business, and had learnt the lesson with their usual thoroughness.

The everyday sort of Americans of 1907 were primitive in many ways, but wonderfully kind-hearted. The general attitude of mind was to keep shouting that you knew everything, while taking pains, secretly, to learn as much as possible, and thus be able to justify the boast before the bluff was called.

We arrived at Hyde Park in pouring rain, and it was get-

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ting dark, so I could not see the house itself, but I was duly impressed by the long flight of marble steps leading up to the front door, dotted with footmen waiting to usher us in, regardless of the rain! The poor things must have been soaked! A pompous English butler emerged from some dry shelter at the top, and we were led through wonderful marble halls, until finally we were received by our hostess at the doorway of a palatial *salon*. I had known her in Paris as a kind dear lady, human and natural like everyone else, and felt much taken aback by her grand manner here in her own house. She wore a magnificent tea-gown, fifty thousand pounds worth of pearls round her neck, and long white kid gloves! Perhaps it was to do honour to the Duchess.

The *salon* was furnished with magnificent ornamental cabinets and chairs of great value, but little comfort. A row of golden seats was against the wall, a row of sofas opposite to them, and an elaborate tea-table made the top of this—I was almost going to write “pen”! Servants waited, and handed the tea, and informality of any sort was clearly not allowed, except to Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish and Harry Lehr, who were amongst the party. These two did and said exactly what they liked and were really witty and amusing. The Press may have laughed at this lady and hugely exaggerated the tales about her, but I can only say that I found her a shrewd, very intelligent woman who knew the exact purpose and value of everything which she did or countenanced. She was kindly and charming too, and I still remember with gratitude how good she was to me all the time that I stayed in New York.

But her wit was certainly merciless at times! On this first occasion of meeting her, I remember, as we sat on the sofas having tea, a row of meek-looking young men seated opposite us on the gold seats, Mrs. Fish suddenly announced :

“They say in Europe that all American women are virtuous. Well, do you wonder? Look at the men!”

The poor things wilted, but were evidently accustomed to

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her sallies, for they said nothing in reply. I could not help picturing the kind of witty answer which she would have received from say—"Sir Anthony Thornhirst"!

Harry Lehr also was in a class by himself—a really naturally funny person. He amused because he was simply expressing himself, not trying to be humorous at all, but to hear him talking to "Mis' Maimee", as he called Mrs. Fish, was to laugh because you could not help it.

The bedrooms at Hyde Park were splendid beyond all the dreams of avarice. Two suites of elaborately carved modern Louis XV furniture were in each room; and all the curtains and table covers were of real Venetian lace. Even the most humble porcelain accessories were decorated with blue satin bows! There were no books, or any evidences that the bedrooms were ever occupied, and the difference between these super-hotel suites and the intimate cosy charm of those at Easton Lodge was indescribable.

We dined off gold plate at Hyde Park, and the food was entirely suitable to its dishes and surroundings. The flowers and fruit were equally magnificent. It was the first time that I had seen American Beauty roses, and I could scarcely believe that they were real, for their identical perfection and long stalks seemed so unlike the flowers I knew. In England in those days this professional perfection of flower decoration, with each bloom fit for a horticultural show, was unknown.

The Duchess made me come to her room as we came up to bed. Everything seemed to her as amazing as it did to me, apparently, after her long absence. She said that she was sure that things had been quite different when she was a girl, and that it was not merely living in England which had made her see it all as quite incredible, especially the loud voices, which also troubled me a good deal.

The next day we went over to the Ogden Mills' place which was not far away. The beauty of the trees, in their autumn colouring, was quite intoxicating. Old memories of

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Summer Hill came back to me when I saw the glorious colours of the maples.

The house of the Ogden Mills was much more like an English one than Hyde Park, and the atmosphere was far less stiff. The guests were all out, running in a paper-chase, when we arrived. The "hate" was a "mad" Chandler, brother of Willie whom I knew in Paris, and Winty whom I met in Rome. Every member of that family of Chandlers had immense charm—"It" I would call it now. In his young days at Cannes Willie was beloved of all the expensive ladies. It was said that "La belle Otera" and "Emilienne d'Alençon" stabbed jewelled bonnet-pins into each other on his account! I can well imagine it, and I feel sure that it is true.

After the visit to Hyde Park I returned to New York, and was soon swallowed up in a whirl of delightful entertainments and week-end visits to Long Island, of which those spent at the Bryces' place, and with Mrs. Frank Greswold at Cassfield, stand out the most clearly. Both these hostesses were charming, and their houses were full of beauty and taste. Chauncey Depew and Frank Greswold looked exactly like English hunting squires, and I realized that there was a side of American society which was not so different from English life after all.

I remember being struck by the uncultivated look of the country through which we passed on our way to pay these visits. It seemed odd that so near to New York the land should still appear almost barren. One is apt to forget that it has taken the labour of centuries to produce the garden-like effect of the English countryside. For the first time I saw a house coming along the road, wheeled on rollers. This idea struck me as perfectly delightful. I roared with laughter at the absurdly helpless look on its prim face! It had a curtain hanging out of one of its two top windows which looked like a tear. Poor house, to be suffering from homesickness already!

I met many remarkable brains among the big business

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people, as well as amongst the members of the *Beau Monde*, and I was greatly impressed with their astuteness and wisdom. One of them was Arthur Brisbane, the columnist of the Hearst Press, who was a friend of my sister's and whom I had met with her in London. He was, and is, a most remarkable man—an Encyclopædia of Knowledge, propelled by a perfect dynamo of human energy. He gave me much good advice about America and the Americans, and how to understand and treat them—quite differently from English people, he said, and I agreed.

I felt greatly complimented by a visit from Mark Twain, who came all the way from his home near Washington Square to call upon me at the Plaza. Alas, I was out, but I returned the visit the next day, and had a thrilling afternoon with him in his own sitting-room. He was dressed in putty-white broadcloth, and reclined upon a divan most of the time. I thought him the wittiest creature imaginable. He told me that he liked *Three Weeks* very much, and understood its meaning, and I found that he did, indeed, know it well, for he discussed every point, and made a profound analysis of the whole book. He also made many interesting comments of his own concerning human instincts and their control. I said I would write an approximation of all he said, and send it to him to read. I did, and he wrote me a most witty reply, in which he said my summary had only the value of a "Cromo-lithograph", because if I had really set down what he had said it would have sounded like Satan roasting a Sunday School! He also added that I was grossly misunderstood, but that he had no intention of defending me, since he was not on earth "to do good"—at least not intentionally! He was always exquisitely whimsical, the dear old man.

We attended a dinner, given by the Daniel Frohmans, together, as guests of honour, and his speech about me was too entertaining; he was certainly a kind friend.

At this same dinner was Jack Barrymore, the handsomest

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and most attractive young man in America at that time ; and many others who were all so kind to me, and seemed to appreciate my books. I used to have ovations wherever I went, and began to think that the rôle of a famous authoress was a most delightful one. The air of America is rightly compared to champagne—exhilarating, delicious, but most intoxicating, and fatal to good judgment and capacity for self-criticism !

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Some Thoughts about America*

**I**N some respects the America of 1907 would be unrecognizable by the young people who know it as it is to-day, although in others it is quite unchanged.

It was, and I suppose still is, though perhaps less to-day than twenty years ago, the perfect kingdom of woman, and with a few exceptions, men are dominated by women more completely there, I am convinced, than in any other country in the world. From the cradle to the grave, women control the aims, compel the activities and command the leisure of the men. Mother-love throttles the individuality of the little boys. Women school-teachers dominate the lives of the youths. Girl fellow-students ride rough-shod over the University men, and, as soon as they leave College, if not before, they find themselves married off to some determined young beauty who keeps their nose to the grindstone during working hours for the rest of their lives, with merciless demands for more and yet more comforts, luxuries and gifts, and who absorbs the whole of their leisure in attempts to satisfy her particular taste in amusements. By the time that the rewards of their ceaseless labour have reached the level of relative riches, there will be tyrannous adolescent daughters waiting to swallow them up afresh with demands for cars, furs, dresses, European trips, marriage settlements, and finally, in all probability, heavy legal expenses in connection with one or more divorces, and the renewed burden of rearing and educating granddaughters who will grow up to repeat the process *ad infinitum*! The great majority of American females

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over one and under 100, possess a natural talent for gold-digging which exceeds all the acquired art of the most expensive European professionals !

In 1907 the yoke imposed on American men by their womankind was even heavier, I believe, than it is to-day ; heavier, that is, in the sense that nearly as much in the way of gifts and attentions was expected of the men, but very much less, from a European point of view, was given in return. As Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish said, all American women were strictly virtuous in those days, if virtue consists in demanding everything in the world from a man, and relying upon his chivalry to take nothing whatsoever in return. In the days before the War, the cult of sex had not been developed, and it had not dawned upon the girls that there could be any delights to be had from amorous adventures other than those of flattery and gifts, and it was thought that chances of obtaining the solid benefits of matrimony might be lessened by pre-marital flirtations carried beyond a certain point. Thus an engagement ring, seriously offered, was demanded as the price of a kiss, and a smart wedding ceremony, and constantly renewed presents and attentions were required to purchase anything more. This applied equally after marriage. The penalty for straying fancy was divorce and remarriage, with its accompaniment of heavy legal charges and alimony payments. Nothing for nothing was the rule, and the mercenary basis of the arrangements was glorified by the title of "high moral standards " and "pure ideals".

After the War, "petting parties" began, and sexual knowledge was broadcast. Such books and films as *Flaming Youth* introduced new standards, and the cult of D. H. Lawrence's books, and of Freudian psychology, brought about a change in the point of view. It began to be realized that sexual indulgence might have something to offer by way of a "kick" for the woman as well as the man. Conventions which tended to deprive girls of the right to pre-marital experience were promptly swept away. With the advent of

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the cheap closed car came the complete breakdown of any attempt at chaperonage, and the discovery that only for girls who were complete "saps" did any unpleasant consequences ever follow upon the heels of licence, also did a good deal to increase the opportunities of the young men to widen their range of experience before marriage. The hire-purchase of a smart limousine and the offering of a few boxes of flowers and sweets was usually sufficient. After marriage, however, variety could still be obtained only at the price of divorce, in the majority of cases.

Of the pure type of woman's love that gives instead of taking, that considers the present welfare and the ultimate good of the loved one without a thought for her own, that despises material gifts and advantages, and seeks only to serve, and love, and give without counting the cost, I have seen few signs during any of the long periods—about ten years in all—that I have spent in America. A woman capable of such devotion would, I believe, be so utterly out of place in most communities there, that she would be misunderstood and despised by everyone, and would probably come to a bad end, unless perhaps some chivalrous newly-immigrated Irishman happened to come across her and married her out of pity!

I was secretly horrified by this, at bottom, purely selfish and mercenary outlook of the average American woman with regard to love during this first visit of mine to the United States. Long residence in Hollywood after the War temporarily blunted most of my perceptions, and for a time I came to think that such an attitude was normal, and to admire the shrewd common sense, and the indomitable pluck of the American girls. These qualities I still admire profoundly. But leisure to think over all that I know of them has made me realize that the spirit of romantic love, as I understand it, is rare in America. I believe, however, that it is still to be found in many quiet corners and in the Middle Western and Southern States.

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Of course there are numbers of exceptions to this picture of the everyday American woman, and I must make clear that none of these descriptions applies to several sections of the national life. The ways of living and trends of thought of the professors and highly cultivated scientists, the brilliant thinkers and writers, and of the members of the "Four Hundred" are completely Cosmopolitan.

For me, love which is doled out in niggardly proportion to the amount of the tangible material benefits received, is and must always remain mere prostitution, even if the result of such spiritual degradation is, as it was in pre-War America, the maintenance of a high standard of physical morality, with its accompanying self-satisfaction and sense of conscious virtue. The joyous abandonment of a passionate peasant girl to the embrace of her lover, without thought of material consequences, seems to me infinitely more moral than this self-righteous cheating of those from whom every material benefit is asked and received, but to whom, in the name of morality, nothing is offered in return. Even the present landslide with regard to the standard of morals in pre-marital relations, though it troubles me deeply, and is very far from the romantic idealism which I believe to be the highest good, is yet, I believe, less degrading to womanhood than the hypocritical and mercenary frigidity of pre-War years.

The everyday American man, who is assuredly the most yielding and chivalrous creature in the world where women are concerned, is plainly in no sense a weakling when it comes to dealing with other men, or with the powers of nature, and I have asked myself how it came about that he should be willing to submit to this perpetual enslavement—to a tyranny exercised at every moment of his day and night.

The usual, and no doubt the right answer is found in the comparative shortage of women in America, and the consequently high value placed upon each specimen of this rare necessity, but I think that this underlying cause has been supplemented by two other factors.

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In the first place the great expansion of America, and the formation of its national traditions, occurred during the Victorian Age, that is, the period in which the romantic idealism, typified by the poems of Tennyson, was the official creed, but in which supreme hypocrisy was equally in the ascendant. The traditional contempt for woman, as the weaker vessel, which the average Englishman has inherited as a second nature, was cancelled in America by genuine respect for the gallantry of the women who endured the hardships and shared the risks of pioneering days, and the chivalrous feelings natural to virile men were fostered to a wonderful degree in their sons by the influence of Victorian idealism, and by appreciation of the real courage and devotion of the remarkable mothers of those still difficult times. The wave of prudery which swept over the world in the latter half of the nineteenth century completed the effect.

How the American women came to be transformed so utterly from the magnificently unselfish wives and mothers of the "forty-niner" period into the gold-digging, go-getting misses of the twentieth century, is hard to say. Perhaps the evil influences of idleness, security and admiration, playing upon the determined indomitable spirit inherited from their pioneering grandmothers, are to blame. The complete breakdown of religious beliefs under the hammer of evolutionary theory is also, I am sure, largely responsible. Above all, the effect of sudden riches and luxury upon a people accustomed to poverty and struggle must have been tremendous. No prayer should be more fervently uttered—and I speak from personal experience—than the one which I detested so much in my Jersey days—"In all time of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us."

The second very important cause of the enslavement of American men by their women is easy to understand. There is one respect in which they undoubtedly get a much better deal from their sweethearts and wives than does the average European; I mean with regard to beauty and general appear-

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ance. The American woman is unquestionably the most beautiful, the best-dressed, best-turned-out and consequently the most attractive of all women. She takes infinitely more trouble about her looks, and thus she achieves her remarkable results. The maintenance of a constantly perfect and *soignie* appearance is, when all is said and done, no small contribution to the pleasure, and to the artistic, as opposed to the physical, delight of would-be lovers. In a cold climate the passions of men can be satisfied, to a great extent, on the emotional level, and this has been the case in North America until recent times. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the influence of the "Beauty Parlour" on American life—an influence which has, I believe, done much to arouse and maintain a greater feeling of self-respect and hope amongst all classes. Every woman, young or old, went to have beauty treatment regularly when I was in America, and the result in terms of flawless beauty was superb.

The American woman has many other splendid qualities. She is capable, shrewd, courageous and amusing, and she can be extremely kind, even generous to those who are not engaged in any form of rivalry—as for example to strangers. The lavish and ungrudging hospitality shown to all visitors to American shores is proverbial, and the reputation is fully earned.

The fields in which rivalry can exist between women are much wider in the United States than in Europe, partly owing to the extensive development of women's clubs. Nothing about the country struck me as more remarkable, on my first visit, than this habit of club-life amongst the women, and since then the system has grown enormously. It cannot be left out of account in any survey of the major influences which differentiate American from European social life. No doubt the clubs have formed a necessary outlet for the wonderful energy of the women at a time when the ordinary duties of life made small demands upon their great reserves of strength. Rivalry in sport, in bridge, in social and intellectual activities

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of all kinds, not excluding charitable work, has been facilitated and developed by the clubs.

Social competition, with expenditure of money as the final criterion of success is, of course, an obsession in the States, and is the underlying cause of the tremendous pressure put upon the earning capacities of the men. There exists also a good deal of intellectual jealousy, of a kind which is rare in Europe. The American woman desires to predominate over the men in every respect, but she is shrewd enough not to attempt to compete with them in business matters, except in rare cases, knowing perhaps instinctively that in this sphere she would, undoubtedly, be tiding for a fall. She therefore sets out to manifest her mental superiority over them—to her own satisfaction at least—by pseudo-intellectual activities of all kinds. She uses her ample leisure to acquire a smattering of two or three European languages perhaps, and lectures on all sorts of subjects, particularly relating to literature and art, besides opera and concerts of all kinds, are much patronized by the club members. They are listened to with rapt attention, although intelligent criticism is rare. The range of subjects dealt with is wide, and the titles of the lectures sound most erudite when recited to a tired husband on his return from his work (in which no interest whatever is displayed). That the treatment of the various questions by the lecturer, and the interpretation of them by the listeners, has been extremely shallow is of small importance, for the claim to intellectual superiority can easily be maintained by the recital of a few unfamiliar names and phrases, little likely to be queried (as they would be in Europe) by the overworked and under-educated men.

It is only fair to add that my knowledge of things relating to the everyday American does not extend to the years following the slump of 1929, and that from all I hear, a profound change has come over the whole continent as a result of this period of adversity. The real good underlying the hard surface of the American woman may have been brought to

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the front, and the genuine kindness and capacity for devotion of which she used sometimes to show herself capable, in relation to an unfortunate girl friend, perhaps, or to a delicate sister, may at last have been extended, in their adversity, to the men from whom she used to extract gold so mercilessly. When there were no more dollars to obtain, perhaps she may have been shocked into the glorious folly of loving on credit! How I hope that this may be the truth, for thus indeed might the unborn soul of the nation come to birth.

The terrible strain put upon the young men in the cities by the struggle to make more and more money, even when the family coffers have already been filled to overflowing in the last generation, struck me very forcibly on the first visit in 1907, and I have been increasingly concerned about it since. It cannot be good for a nation so to drive its young manhood that the escape into temporary oblivion offered by drink becomes a positive necessity. In the leisurely days in Europe before the War the sight of a gentleman drunk at a dinner-party was absolutely unknown, and any man appearing in the slightest degree tipsy in front of ladies on any occasion, would have been socially ostracized.

In America, even in 1907, I noticed that standards were very different in this respect. A very handsome young friend of my hostess became exceedingly drunk quite early during dinner one night, and to my surprise, the attitude of the guests was one of amusement rather than of disapproval. It was evidently a frequent occurrence, and was not considered seriously reprehensible or socially damaging as it would have been in England.

After the War, and especially in the days of Prohibition, the extent of the habit of spirit-drinking both amongst men and women in certain circles, is well known. In Hollywood it certainly reached tragic proportions, and I believe that it was nearly as bad in New York and other cities.

The excessive mental fatigue of the business men, only staved off by alcohol, could be judged from the sparkle and

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brilliancy of their discussions, confined, however, to business topics—at the beginning of dinner, and the complete silence or maudlin sentimentality which supervened before the end in almost every case. There is a platitudinous stage in the conversation of many American men which is well known to Europeans, and which is, I am convinced, originally the product of pure exhaustion, although it often seems to become a habit after awhile.

The appalling struggle for existence—success being measured entirely in terms of wealth—which characterizes the life of men of all ages in the States, is difficult to realize in Europe. It tends to bring to the top those types which are the most pliable, the least hampered by traditional standards of manners, morals and ideas. The classical education which produces the philosophical, contemplative type of mind, and the high level of personal integrity, typified by the English Civil Service, is unknown in America, except in the circles entirely devoted to literary and cultured aims to which I have already referred, and would be considered a distinct handicap there among everyday people. The idea is that attention must be devoted exclusively to the business of getting on, since only thus can a man fulfil what is believed to be his inevitable destiny, namely the advancement of his material well-being and that of his family.

This view appeared so obvious and natural that it was held, I believe, quite generally throughout the States when I was there, except perhaps amongst the miners in Nevada and other Western districts, and in certain religious circles. I have met hundreds of Americans who genuinely believe that the amassing of money is the be-all and end-all of their existence.

It seems that the ideal of service to the nation (except in war) has not yet come within the orbit of American tradition. This is probably responsible for many of the troubles of its political life. The relative stability of England is largely due to the fact that the tradition of political service as the natural

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duty of the leisured class has lasted through all the post-War changes. If money is amassed by one generation, it is expected of the heirs that they should devote themselves to unpaid public service rather than to the further development of their personal fortune, but quite the opposite is expected of the sons of rich American fathers.

Adaptability is certainly an essential to business success in America. I remember being greatly struck, on visiting a big newspaper establishment in New York, by the fact that the men who were doing the heavy manual work had many of them the type of face and expression which one associates with the portraits of Shakespeare or Tennyson, while the Editor and leader-writers were pudding-faced and unintellectual looking ; but they possessed that terrier-like keenness of expression which is characteristic of the young men in this continent who are succeeding in life.

While I was in America I was immensely impressed by the ideas of the "New Thought" propagandists, and I read a great deal of the literature on this subject which was then flooding the country. One book in particular influenced me very much. It was *The History and Power of Mind* by Richard Ingalese. I found in it an explanation for many of my instinctive beliefs, particularly with regard to re-incarnation, and I was strangely attracted by its seemingly authoritative exposition of theosophical ideas. I was not then experienced enough to recognize the meretricious shallowness and really evil tendencies of this type of teaching. I was duly impressed by the rising material prosperity of those who practised this "New Thought" cult, and I worked diligently at exercises to control my thoughts, and taught myself to spend over an hour a day "concentrating" in the approved manner, and visualizing the success and riches which I was learning to desire. I believe that this active visualization and auto-suggestion was practised daily by a great number of people all over America in the years before the War, if not at the present time.

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I have since come to look upon this type of thought concentration and projection of will-power to achieve material aims as a form of modern black magic, intensely dangerous and damaging to the whole personality. Health, wealth and power are undoubtedly attracted to those who practise these arts, as I have proved, but only at the cost of sacrificing every fine moral and spiritual attribute, not to mention the complete annihilation of the sense of humour ! On looking back now, I realize how seriously my own balance was upset, and if I had stayed longer in America at that time I believe that I should have fallen completely under the spell of this new-named but age-old worship of forbidden gods, as I actually did for a time, twenty years later.

The propaganda was skilfully conducted and the sheer selfishness of the aims carefully wrapped up in the specious, quasi-biblical language of the "Unity" movement. It was made to seem quite natural and right to substitute the ideals of Health, Wealth and Happiness, for those of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, and to demand, in the Name of God, that a certain definite sum, say, should be received by a certain date, or that a particular contract should go through at a stated time ; even that one should obtain possession of a coveted fur coat, or some other similar object of desire ! I shudder now to think that I ever entertained these blasphemous and awful ideas, and that my sense of humour could ever have deserted me to the point where I could sit solemnly demanding of God the immediate delivery of an alluring set of pink chiffon underclothes, which I had seen in a shop window and had thought too expensive to buy ! But so it was.

The exponents of New Thought had at least the grace to preach their creed of materialistic magic and human self-sufficiency upon their own responsibility, and thus avoid the yet more profound blasphemy which is, in my view, perpetrated, perhaps without realizing it, by those who pretend that the teachings of Christ can provide the foundation and inspiration for such self-centred activities and beliefs. Num-

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bers of people in America, and many in this country, attempt to utilize the New Testament to support views which are fundamentally opposed to its real teaching, and rest in satisfied contentment upon the Name of Christ, while ignoring every one of His injunctions which do not happen to suit their inclinations.

There is no doubt in my mind that the existence of New Thought and of all the other semi-occult pseudo-religions which pervade the American continent, represents a deeply sinister element in the nation's life. I believe that there are many Fausts amongst the successful millionaires, and even when the bargain with Evil is not so complete as utterly to destroy the soul, nevertheless the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain.

I feel that I have good cause to thank my Guardian Angel for having twice brought about my escape, just before it was too late, from the insidious occult influences which have played so large, though invisible, a part in American life during the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER XV

*America Out West*

THE most delightful part of my trip to America began when I went out West to visit the mining camps and ranches of Nevada, because this country and its inhabitants represented romance. They were full of the chivalry, of the abstract respect for honest womanhood, and of the rough sense of justice towards men, which were the heritage of an earlier time, and which had survived together with the pioneer conditions which had aroused them. They possessed courage too, and endurance. They may have had thousands of faults, and, of course, there were "dirty yellow dogs" among them, but the mass were Bayards. Their qualities showed in their manners, and in their calm self-confidence without swagger. Bret Hart and Owen Wister wrote of them, but although, when I went there in the spring of 1908, their stories were considered to be rather applicable to a date further back—as were the exploits of Buffalo Bill—I did not find it so. The men I met seemed to have stepped straight out of *The Virginian*.

Our host promised to show us something unusual, as a new camp had been opened about two months before this on the report of a rich new gold deposit at a place in the desert which the miners had named "Rawhide". It was just under a hundred miles from the town named Goldfield, and could boast only a few board houses; the rest of the accommodation was under canvas. It was not an inviting place of residence!

Not a single blade of grass existed, nor anything green;

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there was nothing to see but earthy sand, and gloomy, greyish sage-brush. There were dance halls, and a rough board hotel with a gambling saloon and bar on the ground floor and about thirty bedrooms above. These had cheap ill-fitting plank partitions, in some cases papered with old newspapers, and the doors consisted of a few boards nailed together, with a lift latch by way of fastening.

To add to the horror of the place there seemed to be a continual wind blowing the dust of the desert about in clouds, and rattlesnakes were plentiful among the rough boulders on the slopes of the hills. I have put most of the happenings which occurred during our trip, and a full description of it all, into my book *Elizabeth Visits America*, but in it I did not tell of one interesting thing. There was at that date a kind of bandit called "Scottie" who made mysterious fortunes, and came into semi-civilization now and then to spend them. He was a most desperate and lawless character, and his lair was in "Death Valley", a sinister place below sea level, and unbearably hot and damp. He was supposed to have found an inexhaustible gold deposit and to guard the secret at the point of the gun.

As all America at this time was worked-up about *Three Weeks* I used to get hundreds of letters from strangers, most of them from men, telling me that they understood the book, and felt just the same as Paul had felt! Only a very few were unsympathetic; these were mostly from elderly women. Among a sack-full which came to Goldfields was one from the famous Scottie. It said that he loved *Three Weeks* and contained a most polite invitation for me to visit him in Death Valley. If I would come, he gave directions as to where I was to drive in the desert, and at what point I would meet a party of his men. There I was to leave my escort and go with them to his lair. My friends should wait, and "on the honour of a bandit" he would deliver me back to them next day. He only wished to show me what the *real* Wild West was, he said, and to do honour to a lady whom he

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knew must be a "great woman" to have written such a grand story as *Three Weeks*!

He assured me that I need have no fear, nothing should harm me, for although he was an outlaw he was an American, and respected women. Of course, I decided to go, but unfortunately the friends I was with would not hear of it. He was a desperate character, they said, and they could not take the responsibility of allowing me out of their protection. Alas! all I could do was to send the photograph Scottie had asked for, and a letter of regrets and of thanks for all the nice things he had said. I assured him that I would have unhesitatingly trusted to the "honour of a bandit", but that my trip was all arranged and there would not be time. I have always regretted that I did not take this chance at what might have been a real adventure!

The types of the miners were so interesting. As we left Chicago behind, going west, the figures of the men seemed to be less thickset, and more loose-limbed and athletic, and in the mining camps they reached perfection. In my journal of the time there are panegyrics about their extraordinary look of breeding, and all had that careless self-confidence which one associates with the aristocracies of nations.

Their unwritten laws were wonderful. A miner's wife was perfectly safe at any hour of the day or night, but any other woman who could be even faintly suspected of flirtatious ways was considered fair game, and could be fought for and seized by the strongest male. There were not many women in Rawhide, and the flighty ones lived in a quarter by themselves with their names over their doors—"Katie", "Polly", etc. The sheriff and the deputy constables of Nevada were our hosts, and showed us everything to be seen. We went to all the dance halls and gambling saloons, which were in tents or board shanties. Etiquette was severe, and there was no lawlessness. The community had sent a deputation to me at Goldfields, inviting me to visit their camp at Rawhide because they liked *Three Weeks*, and so they treated me as a



Mrs. Glyn and the miners at Rawhide



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queen. One dear fellow rode ninety miles across the desert to get some yellow daisies to put on the oil-cloth-covered table for the banquet they were giving me. Ninety miles across a vile country, just for a few flowers—the only ones procurable! And this hero never even let me know his name, or which one of them he was. Nowhere in the world, whether in the houses of the rich, or in the courts of kings, have I found such chivalry, such a natural sense of the fitness of things, such innate aristocracy as in the mining camps of Nevada.

All sorts of strange things happened which it would take chapters to relate. Much of it I put into *Elizabeth*. One lovely thing I must describe, although it may seem vain of me, because it shows the characters of the men so well. A deputation of miners came, headed by Governor Hutchinson, to offer me a “gun” as a present, and a token that they appreciated my book.

“We give you this here gun, Elinor Glyn,” the man who made the speech said, “because we like your darned pluck. You ain’t afraid, and we ain’t neither.”

Then Governor Hutchinson pinned the badge of deputy constable on my breast and they all cheered, and I was told that I could now arrest “Any boy in the state.” So, of course, I answered that I wanted to “arrest” the lot—they were all so delightful! These two things, the “gun”, a small pistol mounted in mother o’ pearl, and the badge, are my most cherished possessions, as they represent the whole-hearted tribute of a splendid community of *gentlemen*.

In San Francisco *Three Weeks* had created a different impression among some of the “Socialites”. I mean what that word means now; I do not know if it was invented then. I arrived from Denver at the Fairmount Hotel, where I was to await my hosts from Santa Barbara. It was the luncheon hour.

I looked unimportant, I suppose, and was shown to a table alone, quite close to a larger one round which about six women

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were sitting. I could not help overhearing every word they said. They were all talking of someone, and discussing whether or no they would "turn her down" that night. I became interested, as I fancied they must be referring to a ball which was being given for the officers of the Fleet, in honour of the "Much Kissed Hobson" the hero of Manilla. The Admiral had sent me a special invitation to the ball.

Some of the ladies said one thing, some another, the point being whether it would be to their advantage to "throw down" the person in question. The verdict seemed to be for this course. I wondered who the poor creature could be and felt sorry for her, they were so determined to humble her. Then another lady joined the party, and I suddenly heard my own name, and realized that I was the bone of contention! The newcomer told them that they had better be careful, for she had received a letter from New York saying that Elinor Glyn had been a guest of the Vanderbilts, and was a friend of Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish!

This settled things. The poor ladies, who were, I afterwards found, the hostesses of the ball, collapsed, and it was decided that in spite of *Three Weeks* being a "most improper book" (which they had not read), they would allow the author to be received with honour!

Admiral Long and I laughed over this incident, years afterwards, in Peace Conference days in Paris.

My hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Miller Graham, arrived in time for the ball, and we went to it together. The committee of ladies shook hands with the author of *Three Weeks* most graciously. I often have wondered if they recognized me as the person sitting at the little table near them at lunch, who must have heard all they said. I thanked them for so kindly inviting me to the ball, but I fear they did not see the point! The "Much Kissed Hobson" did, however, and so did Admiral Long and Father Gleason, the chaplain of the Fleet.

Father Gleason was one of my boldest defenders. He

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thought very highly of *Three Weeks*, and said so ! When a friend interrupted him, saying, "Even if we all agree with you, Father Gleason, would it not be better that you should not express yourself so publicly in the matter ?" the big man replied simply, "At least a priest should have the courage of his convictions" !

He was a very unusual person, for when it comes to the point, most men are physically brave, but I have found that many of them are rather pitiful moral cowards ; whereas women are wretched creatures about inherited fears, such as mice and spiders, but quite brave about their convictions. Father Gleason, however, was brave in both ways, and I was grateful to him. "The book is full of noble ideals," he said. "I recommend all my boys to read it." The result was that San Francisco turned to me, and the "Socialites" read *Three Weeks* for themselves—and liked it.

When I wrote to my friends in England and France about all these happenings, they would hardly believe me. Quaint as it seems now, however, it was true. Whether you were "for" or "against" *Three Weeks* was quite an important matter in the United States, in the spring of 1908.

The day after the ball I went with reporters to see the town of San Francisco. It had been wrecked by the earthquake and destroyed by fire only two years before, and the ruins on Nobs Hill and in the town had not yet been rebuilt. I was absolutely astonished at the reporters, who seemed eager to tell me—a visiting stranger—about the despicable graft on the part of building contractors which had been exposed by the shock. Great walls and columns, supposed to be solid, now showed that they were only shells filled with rubble. One would have thought that they would have been ashamed to point out the disgraceful dishonesty of the contractors—their own countrymen ; but not at all. Their attitude was that it was darned hard luck on them being found out in this way by a dirty trick of nature !

There was something strangely sinister about the atmo-

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sphere of San Francisco, perhaps due to the earthquake, although the people themselves were charming.

I went on to Los Angeles eventually. Hollywood had hardly been heard of then—if at all—and Los Angeles itself was an ordinary Californian town. It did not dream of its coming greatness.

By this time all arrangements had been made for my *Three Weeks* to be played by James Hackett in St. Louis in the autumn, in a version I had written of it myself, and I returned to New York *en route* for London, literally enchanted by America. On the way east I stayed at Salt Lake City, and saw the Mormon community, and I was immensely interested in them. I never had the nature, however, which wanted to share a man!

In New York a friend told me that I could make a hundred pounds or so more pocket-money for myself by giving her company the stock rights of *Three Weeks*. She assured me that it would not interfere with any other deals, and that her proposal was just a little friendly arrangement between us, as she knew that I understood nothing about business. I thought it so nice of her, and signed the contract. But unfortunately for me, as a result of this, Mr. Hackett did not produce *Three Weeks* at St. Louis, and my American friends in business, with knowing smiles, advised me to employ an agent in future.

Even in this very abridged chronicle of my experiences in America, I would like to tell of one other incident which occurred while I was in New York, the strangest, I believe, which could happen to any woman.

The person concerned is dead, and must, of course, be nameless. But I can name the hostess who introduced us. She was Miss McAlister, daughter of the leader of the "Four Hundred". She used to entertain celebrities at select little parties at Delmonico's.

She invited me one day to meet a special millionaire from the West. He was a character, she said, and although rough,

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very interesting and fabulously rich. The party was four, for she had asked a nonentity for herself, so as to leave the millionaire free to talk to me. He turned out to be a shortish, square man of immensely strong physique, about as plebeian-looking as it would be possible for a man in evening dress to appear. The dinner was a failure because he never spoke a word, but watched me all the evening as a scientist might watch the ways and habits of a strange animal under observation. Miss McAlister was apologetic about it, afterwards, but she implored me to come again, because she said Dash H. Blank really *was* interesting! I was intrigued, and so I went. This time he spent the evening asking me every sort of question as to my tastes, ideas and opinions. I was amused. At the end, when we were saying good night, he asked if he might call on me at four o'clock the next day, and if he might send me some flowers. I said yes.

I had a small apartment at the Plaza, and in the sitting-room I had converted one closed bookcase into a cupboard for my shoes.

In those days one wore negligées of lovely satins, with little mule slippers which had posies of Lucile silk roses as buckles to match the trimmings. They were deliciously feminine and alluring.

Inadvertently my maid had left the door of the shoe cupboard half open, and when I went in to greet Mr. Dash H. Blank I found him in correct morning coat, with a top-hat reposing on a chair, standing in front of the cupboard with a blue satin slipper in his hand. I suppose I looked haughty, for he asked me at once not to be annoyed, as he was genuinely appreciating the shoe! We sat down stiffly on the sofa, he with the "mule" still in his hands. Literally dozens of gardenias as big as camellias had arrived in the morning, and were everywhere about.

He looked round the room at the flowers and said he was glad they were good ones. "I ordered gardenias", he

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informed me, "because they are a darned sight the most expensive, and only the best is good enough for you." This, of course, placated me. He then asked if I would listen to him and not interrupt him, as he had a kind of business proposition to put before me. He began, and I did not speak. He told me of his hard youth. He had originally come from the "por white trash" of Virginia and had run away at twelve years old and made a fortune out West after frightful struggles, manual and mental. He had married young, but his wife "did not amount to anything" in his life, and he had given her all the money she wanted and she did not want him. He had had great ideals always, he said, and after he had educated himself had begun to take interest in the study of heredity, and in deductive methods of reasoning. He had been very much interested in *Three Weeks*, and had drawn conclusions from it as to the kind of spirit and mentality of the author. He had sent suitable agents to investigate my status, antecedents and circumstances, and had found that they all tallied with his ideals. He had made, as he said, this further deduction, that a "husband who would let a woman of your appearance travel around alone could be squared". (He little knew the casual English!) He had ascertained that the only thing in life which mattered to me was the welfare of my two children; and, in short, this was his proposition: If I would come away with him and have a son, he would "square" the husband—settle a fabulous amount upon my little daughters—with a million for myself—and the rest of his entire personal fortune upon the son-to-be!

His face was intensely earnest and his voice respectful. I was so dumbfounded that I could not answer for a minute. He went on to explain that his theory was that his great strength, his will, his purpose, his wits, matched with my cultivation of mind and old race, fine bones, and soaring spirit, would produce a perfect being, worthy to inherit great wealth! He kept involuntarily measuring the slipper against

## *America Out West*

his great hand. I was profoundly touched ; he meant it as the highest tribute to womanhood.

There was mist in his eyes as he said in his broad dialect : "Now, it's up to you, Ma'am." (Westerners said Ma'am to all women they respected in those days.)

I thanked him for the honour he had done me, which I would remember always, but said that besides other reasons which must make me refuse, was the fundamental one, as it seemed to me, that such a son would have to be the result of a love as great as that of Paul and the Lady, and not of a business arrangement. He got up then and took up his hat with one hand, while he still held the satin mule in the other.

"By God ! I hadn't thought of that !" he said, speaking as a person who has received a convincing, final blow. Then he stood and looked at me, and I have not often seen such an expression in a man's eyes.

"Good-bye, Elinor Glyn," he continued. "You are a great woman. May I keep this ?" he held up the slipper. I just nodded ; I felt a lump in my throat, and he went to the door. As he was half-way he turned and said in a husky voice :

"Well I'd like you to know, Ma'am, the love wouldn't be wanting on one side." Then he disappeared, shutting the door after him, and I sat down on the sofa really overcome.

Now this incident is what I call true romance, and it fittingly ends the story of my first adventure in the New World.

## CHAPTER XVI

*A Difficult Time*

I RETURNED from my trip to America in the summer of 1908, flushed with success, and fortunately, fairly well equipped with finance. Although always a very bad business woman, my books were so extremely successful at this time that I could not fail to make a good deal of money.

Clayton met me in London, having himself not long reached home after the trip to Ceylon, Japan and Russia, from which, as usual, he had returned safely, with all the family flourishing and not even a single piece of luggage lost or delayed! I gathered that the voyage there had been a great pleasure to everyone; there had even been the exciting adventure of a train accident in Siberia to add to the thrills. The children had grown enormously, and the value of travel for mental development was very apparent. My mother, too, had had, she declared, the happiest six months she had known since my father died.

I was shocked, however, by Clayton's appearance. He had grown very much stouter, and his cheeks had the violet tinge which one associates with serious heart trouble. Worse still, his merry smile had gone and he had a pathetic look which I could not bear to see. Something was seriously wrong, evidently, and my heart sank with a feeling of cold apprehension.

It was some time before I could find out the cause; but one day he came into my sitting-room and handed me, without a word, a letter from the family solicitors. Slowly I grasped its meaning. He had spent the whole of his capital,

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had mortgaged the property to the hilt, and had got into debt to the extent of many thousand pounds in addition ; and now the crash had come.

This was the very first intimation I had had that he was short of money, or using up his capital. I had imagined him to be a very rich man, and he had always sternly discouraged any attempts on my part to inquire into the source or amount of his income. I had heard that he had a property in North London as well as the Essex Estate, and he had settled a generous sum on me in my marriage settlement, by way of jointure in case of widowhood ; that was all I knew.

I blamed myself terribly for not having realized before that we must be living above our income, and that no ordinary estate could be expected to bear the cost of our constant journeys—travelling was expensive in those days—and our luxurious mode of life. My blindness was inexcusable of course, but was due to my complete respect for my husband's judgment and ability in the conduct of all material affairs. I realized that I should have suspected before that all was not well and have helped him to economize before it was too late, and I determined to make what amends I could now.

I was able to pay off the debts he owed, on this first occasion, out of my savings, and of course I immediately took over the payment of all the household expenses, and the cost of the children's education. Sheering Hall was sold, and we lived permanently with my mother at her little house, Lamberts, in Sheering village, where Clayton had already built an extra wing, to accommodate the children and their governess, and in the garden of which I had built a little pavilion to which I could retreat when I wanted to write. My mother had looked after the children for the greater part of the time since our return from Egypt, for she had become so fond of them while we were together there, and as Clayton and I were constantly moving about, we had been glad to leave them safely in her devoted care.

I thank God when I remember that I never reproached

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my husband, either then, or in any of the other financial crises which recurred at regular intervals henceforward. Grandmamma's teaching that one must accept blows with fortitude and without repining was not the only reason for this ; I had also a strong feeling that behind the apparent selfishness and folly of his behaviour there lay a profound tragedy, although I did not fully understand how great this was until I read through the papers in his desk after his death in 1915, and mourned, in deep sincerity and sorrow, a very gallant if misguided gentleman.

The story, as I finally understood it, was this. Clayton had been brought up by a foolishly fond mother to have and to expect every luxury. Generous to a fault, economy, and what he considered little meannesses, were impossible to him, and with the prospect of inheriting a very considerable fortune, he learnt to overspend his income even in his Oxford days, and began to pile up debts. He was afraid to reveal these to his father and the family solicitor, and allowed himself to get into the hands of moneylenders while he was still a young man.

His father's death a few years before our marriage seemed to put an end to his troubles for the time, but he was obliged to saddle the property with mortgages at high rates of interest in order to pay off the claims of his creditors.

I think that he tried for some years after we married to keep his expenditure within the bounds of his reduced resources, for he let the family place Durrington, and took me to live at the much smaller house, Sheering Hall, a mile away, directly after our honeymoon, and I remember that he used to make periodic efforts to economize on staff and gardeners in those early days. He wanted to have a son who would follow the family tradition and go into the Rifle Brigade. Clayton was very proud of his uncle, General Sir Julius Glyn (one of the heroes of the Crimea), and had always regretted that his mother would not let him go into the army.

I was too ill to realize at the time how terribly disap-

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pointed he was that our second baby was not a son, but it seems to have been a severe blow. The motive which he had for preserving his estate intact was gone, and he went off to Monte Carlo to forget his troubles, just like the hero of a Ouida novel, by gambling heavily—and unsuccessfully. Instead of winning enough to pay his bills, as no doubt he hoped to do, he had the shocking bad luck to lose over £10,000!

At the same time the doctor began to worry him about the state of his heart, and with the best intentions, no doubt, urged him, upon pain of an early death, to give up all the things which he cared most about—long days up and down hill, shooting grouse under an August sun, travel in hot climates, Turkish baths, rich food, perfect wine and strong cigars.

Rigid economy and its resulting boredom, both for himself and me; rigid dieting and abandonment of all pleasures and interests for himself—that was the unattractive outlook offered by his financial and medical advisers; further loans, further delights, and—well, a much shortened life, were the alternatives, no doubt skilfully presented in an alluring light by his evil geniuses, the moneylenders.

Of course, he was wrong to choose the second path, but let him who is without the sin of extravagance cast the first stone. I certainly do not and never have blamed him, and I would, I feel sure, have made the same choice if I had been faced with such alternatives—boredom extended through long dreary years, or a short life and a merry one. He undoubtedly purchased present pleasure at too high a price, like many another before him, but the way in which he carried out his scheme and accepted the full implications of his decision was tragic but superb. It was not his fault that anyone but his solicitor ever knew of his troubles, and he did his utmost to make up to us all for his shortcomings in other ways, by taking us about, and giving us the most wonderful time for the ten years that his money lasted. He did not let me

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suspect that he had any difficulties at all, so long as the faintest chance remained that I need never know.

He evidently calculated that he could not live more than eight or ten years at the most and that by using the whole of his capital as income he could make all of our lives happy for that period.

After that—the deluge!

If things had turned out as he planned, that is, if he had died before his money ran out, there would have been no need to touch the substantial marriage settlement which he had made upon me and the children, and so we should not have been penniless. As it was, of course, I had to sign all this away when the crash came, but he did not intend this and was dreadfully distressed about it. Judging by the numbers of rich and apparently earnest admirers which I had in those days I think he might well be excused for not worrying more about my future, since I am sure that he expected that I should marry again very soon, if left a widow. I believe his greatest anxiety was with regard to my mother, to whom he was genuinely devoted, but his mind was set at rest on this point by the great success of Lucy's business, "Luciles Ltd.", in which my mother held many of the Founder's shares. He could not foresee that she also would lose all her money with the failure of the London Luciles in 1917, and would be dependent upon me for a further twenty or thirty years.

Only two things could upset the success of Clayton's plan. One was the birth of a son; and this he naturally determined should not by any chance occur. The other was that which actually happened, and which produced the situation which I returned from America to find, namely, the prolongation of his own life beyond the ten years period for which he had allowed, and the consequent disappearance of his fortune before he had ceased to need it.

Those who gamble with Death, it seems, usually live to regret it, and so with poor Clayton. His magnificent con-

## *A Difficult Time*

stitution defied all his efforts to undermine it, and he lived for seven tragic years longer than he had planned, suffering greatly in the final stages, although he never complained and remained pathetically gay and debonair to the day of his death.

It was no fault of his that he lived so long. He considered that suicide, recognizable as such, was dramatic and vulgar, and he would not resort to it, but he left nothing undone to increase his natural ill-health. In the days before we understood all this, his doctor and I used to imagine that his categorical refusal to undertake treatments or to control his diet—even to stop smoking a dozen strong cigars in a day—was due to pure self-indulgence, and we used to try to persuade and scold him into altering his ways. He used to listen to all we had to say with a smile and without a word of self-defence—and smoke sixteen the next day.

When at last I realized the truth and remembered the astonishing self-control which had enabled him throughout several years to bear his anxieties without a sign, or any faltering of his purpose, and to remain invariably merry and kind, although enduring already a burden of ill-health greater I believe than any of us dreamed of at the time, I felt ashamed of having imagined him capable of any such foolish self-indulgence against his will, although no doubt the habits of a lifetime became overmastering in the end.

Clayton's outlook was that of an eighteenth-century gallant, proud, desperate and brave under a mask of good-humoured laziness and materialism. The gambler's spirit—which is after all but another form of the spirit of adventure which has created the wealth of the whole world—was innate in him, and with it the courage to lose with humour and without self-pity, a fault which he abhorred. He was always tragically unlucky; even when he played with Death as his partner instead of his adversary, he could not win.

My mother, who adored him, could never bring herself to believe him anything but perfectly wise and right in every respect, and found it quite beyond her powers to oppose his

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wishes in regard to household expenditures, or to curtail the heavy travelling and hotel costs incurred when they wintered together in the South of France, as they did in most of the following years. I also found it impossible to enforce economies, for it seemed ungenerous to deny to Clayton the luxuries which he had provided so lavishly for me while he still had the power.

The result was that the bills soon began to assume formidable proportions once more, and the years from the summer of 1908 to the winter of 1913 stay in my memory as one long nightmare of recurring financial crises, as fresh debts of Clayton's came to light ; of hastily written novels, the advance payments on which were already mortgaged to some pressing creditor, or urgently required to pay the household bills or school fees of the children. Again and again we were saved from disaster only by some providential windfall in the way of an unexpected cheque from my publisher, or for some well-paid short story. How I thanked my stars for the great success of my books at this time !

On one terrible occasion, in 1911, I discovered that Clayton had supplemented the income which I gave him by borrowing £1,000 from a friend. I felt particularly humiliated, for it was a friend who had often paid attentions to me, and who had never ceased to show his devotion. The idea of accepting money from such a quarter was intolerable to me, and I went to Mr. Blumenfeld, then Editor of the *Daily Express*, and begged him to help me to earn £1,000 at once. He promised to pay me this amount within the month if I would deliver a new full-length novel suitable for publication as a *feuilleton*, before the end of the serial then appearing in the paper. The time allowed turned out to be only eighteen days, but I did the whole of the work within the stipulated period, and the first instalment of *The Reason Why* came out in the *Daily Express* just three weeks after I had first started to write. This story, which I have always looked upon as my very worst effort, made a great deal of money when it

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appeared in book form, both in England and in America, for which mercy I offered up grateful prayers, but which brought home to me the fact that the amount of money which I could make by writing books did not depend upon their literary merit! As my only conscious object, by this time, was to make enough money to keep myself and all the family in comfort, and pay off Clayton's debts, I am afraid that this experience did not tend to improve my literary style, particularly as my next book *Halcyone*, in which I tried to return to earlier standards, was a complete failure from a financial point of view.

I received my £1,000 cheque from the *Daily Express* within the month as promised, and was able to redeem that terrible I.O.U. of Clayton's which had haunted me all the time I wrote the book. Imbued with Grandmamma's eighteenth-century outlook it seemed to me utterly degrading for a lady to accept money from a would-be or even from a real lover. If there were any material advantages whatever to be gained by becoming a man's mistress, the affair was in my view nothing but common prostitution. My only choice on this occasion seemed to lie between this degradation of myself, or of my pen. *The Reason Why* is my witness that I chose the pen.

Sometimes my difficulties were such that I was obliged to accept help from my sister, and I owe a deep debt of gratitude to her, and also to various members of the Glyn family and some old friends who came to Clayton's rescue more than once. I am thankful to say that I was able, in the end, to repay every one of them in full.

I was determined that the children's education at least should not suffer. My eldest daughter, Margot, who was just sixteen at the time of my return from America, had already been to school in France, before her trip round the world, and I was able to send her to Dresden in the following winter accompanied by her governess Miss Dixon, who had been with her since her babyhood. She caught scarlet fever

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in the spring, and was snatched off by the German authorities to a terrible isolation hospital where she would certainly have died, if dear, faithful Dixie had not insisted on going into the hospital with her, and on nursing her personally. The staff consisted of only one nurse and one wardmaid for a ward of thirty beds, in addition to the private room which the child was given, and the poor nurse was on duty both by day and night! I was horrified by the news and rushed to Dresden, but was not allowed to have even a glimpse of Dixie, and was treated by the German Sanitary Authorities with that crude high-handed brutality which was the hallmark of German pre-War "Kultur". I have never forgotten the experience, which helped me later on to understand how the atrocities attributed to the German soldiers in the occupied areas could very well be true.

I was so disgusted with Germany that as soon as she recovered I fetched Margot away from Dresden and sent her to Paris with Dixie; and on my second visit to Russia, in the summer of 1910, I took her with me, though she was still only seventeen and not officially "out". The success of *The Reason Why* also made possible a truly delightful motor trip through Italy in the spring of 1911. We took two months over it and visited all the wonderful old towns of the early Renaissance period, Perugia and San Gimignano being our especial joy.

In 1912, I presented Margot at an early court, and she had two seasons in London before the War, for we leased a tiny house in Green Street, since pulled down, while Clayton and my mother stayed on at Lamberts. I could not afford to give a dance for her and I am afraid that her enjoyment was a good deal spoilt by ceaseless financial worries, and anxieties about Clayton's health, which was very bad at that time. Her devotion to him was wonderful and she used to insist on returning to Essex to take care of him whenever he was ill. I was deeply interested to see, partly for myself, and partly through her eyes, how profoundly London society

## *A Difficult Time*

had changed since I was a girl, and in spite of all my troubles I enjoyed going about during those two seasons and am glad that I had this opportunity of seeing the end of the pre-War period in England.

My little daughter, Juliet, was sent to school at Eastbourne in 1909, and stayed on there until the autumn of 1913, when I brought her over to the house I had taken in Paris. We all remained there until the outbreak of war, another interesting experience about which I shall tell later. The headmistress of her school was a wonderful woman, Miss Jane Potts, formerly governess for eleven years to Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone. She is one of the most intelligent, highly-educated, broad-minded persons whom I have ever known. Only England can produce women of the type of Miss Potts, and the nation owes them a deeper debt of gratitude than is generally realized. They are the people who maintain unimpaired, or rather, hand on from one generation to another with added lustre, the finest traditions of the race. She is tall, gaunt, and splendidly ugly, with shrewd merry eyes which twinkle behind her spectacles. No one ever understood the world better than Miss Potts, yet with all her sound common sense she combines a lofty idealism and a greatness of spirit which is almost Elizabethan in its quality. She compelled the devotion of her pupils by the sheer force of personality ; discipline was strict, but was never enforced by rewards or punishments of any kind. Her humorous but scathing tongue was punishment enough and her word of praise a more than ample repayment for any effort.

Juliet adored her, and hated leaving the school, although she had been there for nearly five years, and I thought she would be glad of a change. I think I would not have taken her away while still so young—not yet fifteen—if I had realized that I was really putting an end to the poor child's education, but it was no fault of mine that she did not have the same opportunities for travel and study after she left as Margot had had. After a winter's work in Paris, the outbreak of war

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put an end to further lessons abroad, and the naughty little thing absolutely refused to go back to school in England. Instead she put up her hair, pretended to be eighteen, and went with her sister to work as a V.A.D. nurse in a London war hospital, despite all my scoldings and entreaties. She was supported in this scandalously independent behaviour by the approval of Miss Potts, of my mother, and of Clayton, so what could a mere mother do to combat such influences?

I am glad to say that in spite of all our difficulties, and the troubles of the War period which clouded their lives just at the age when most girls expect to have their gayest time, both my children married happily soon after the War. My five grandchildren are the joy of my old—or is it new?—age, and represent a very complete recompense for the time of struggle and unhappiness which I had to face in those—for me—black years before the War.

C H A P T E R   X V I I

*Imperial Russia, 1910*

**I**N the autumn of 1909 I was staying in a French country house for a shooting party, when I received a telegram from the Grand Duchess Cyril of Russia, whom I had already met in Paris, suggesting that I should meet her at Munich, through which she and her mother-in-law, the Grand Duchess Vladimir, would be passing shortly. Accordingly I went, and was rewarded by a perfectly charming invitation to come and spend the following winter in St. Petersburg, with a view to writing a book having the life of Russian Court Society as its background. New material with which to feed my imagination had become a vital necessity to me by this time, as I was now a professional authoress, under contract to supply a new full-length novel every year.

Anything more charming than the manners of these two ladies it would be hard to imagine. The young Grand Duchess was not beautiful like her sister, the Queen of Roumania, but she possessed a peculiar, unconscious charm, and had the downright honest manner which is so flattering when it is the accompaniment of friendly words. The Grand Duchess Vladimir was a most stately, magnificent looking princess, in deep mourning for her husband, who had died the year before.

They had read and liked *Three Weeks*, and said that they could see from my study of "the lady" that I appreciated the Russian character, and would therefore be capable of making a sympathetic picture of their country.

I was naturally delighted, and decided to go. Russia had

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always attracted me, and from earliest youth I had felt that I should go there some day.

It was arranged that I should arrive on December 28 (by the English calendar) and that I should stay at the Hôtel de l'Europe, as the elder Grand Duchess explained that in this way I should have more liberty than if I stayed in the Palace. She advised me to bring plenty of dresses, as it was reported that the Emperor and Empress were to emerge from their retirement at Tsarskoe Selo, and that there would be Court Balls, and much gaiety.

I rushed back to England and ordered a rather extravagant trousseau at Luciles, feeling that I must do honour to such a wonderful invitation. Reboux in Paris also supplied a number of hats to go with the Lucile masterpieces! I was destined to be punished for these extravagances, however, for just as I left London I learnt of the death of the Grand Duke Michael, who had lived at Cannes, and whose son had married Countess Torby and lived in England. It was too late to change my plans, and I set off as arranged, anxiously wondering whether this news would make a great difference to the gaieties of which the Grand Duchess had spoken. Alas! I found on arrival that Court mourning of the strictest kind had been ordered for two months. The parties and balls I had looked forward to so much were all indefinitely postponed.

I spent the Saturday afternoon of my arrival wondering what I could possibly do about mourning clothes, as I had only two black dresses, one day and one evening one. These were both very becoming, fortunately, and had to serve, while all my other splendours simply stayed in their cupboards. Even the black Reboux hats could not be worn, I discovered, on arriving at the British Embassy for tea, as Lady Nicholson, our Ambassadress, informed me that the regulation headgear was a mourning bonnet of black crêpe with a long and flowing veil. She had very kindly ordered one for me, and I was somewhat consoled, on trying it on, to discover that it was really very becoming!

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I attended Mass with the Grand Duchess Vladimir the next day, and was much impressed by the weird, but beautiful unaccompanied singing, and the magnificent robes of the priests, which were of emerald green silk embroidered all over with gold crosses, and partly covered by stoles of rich cloth of silver, a tall black cap completing the attire. The Grand Duchess's daughter, Princess Nicholas of Greece, was also present in deep mourning.

Her brothers the Grand Dukes Boris and André, in splendid uniforms, came up and kissed their mother's hand in the *salon* after the service, and I was presented to them all, and to the kind, friendly ladies-in-waiting, and to several handsome officers. The men were tall and slim and fine-looking, but I was struck by the strange grey-white of all the faces, both the men and the women, caused, I suppose, by the lack of fresh air in the steam-heated rooms.

The Grand Duke Boris appeared much changed since Egypt. His old air of gaiety had been replaced by a look of bored discontent. The Grand Duke André looked more out-of-door and fresh, and the Grand Duchess Helene—Princess Nicholas of Greece—was most attractive. She had a typically Russian nose, lovely mysterious eyes of a strange yellowish-hazel, level eyebrows, and a *triste*, interesting smile, full of passion and melancholy, but strangely charming. She had the same brushed-up *ondulé* hair as the rest, but her dress was much more chic than most, though all were well made. She said the kindest things about my books and seemed to know them well, which flattered me greatly. She turned me to the light, saying that she wished to see whether my eyes were green “like emeralds”, as she declared that her brother-in-law, then Crown-Prince Constantine of Greece, had told her that they were. We all laughed at this, but after the examination she announced that it was quite true that my eyes were really green!

A table was then brought in by men-servants, of whom there seemed to be great numbers about, on which

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were spread many different varieties of savoury dishes, and some peculiar bread. This I learnt was the famous Russian Zakouska, the patron saint of all *borts d'aubres*. I was made to taste several of them, especially those which I was assured were most typically "Russian". We went on into the dining-room after this, and sat down at a huge table, some of the officers sitting at two smaller round ones at the side. The room seemed to be dark, and lofty, and to be filled with a quantity of silver plate, not brightly polished as in England, but dull, like pewter.

The good manners of these charming people were such that all those within hearing of me spoke English, even when talking to each other, and the Grand Duchess Vladimir, dear, kind lady, spoke always to her sons and son-in-law in English whenever I was present. This was apparently a part of their gracious hospitality, for a few days later a French Marquis who was passing through St. Petersburg, was invited to lunch, whereupon the whole table spoke French. It was a *beau geste*. The conversation was brilliant and sparkling, in whatever language it was conducted, and everyone seemed to be witty and full of understanding.

The food was so rich that I could not eat it, and numbers of different wines were offered. The Grand Duchess insisted that I should drink some, as she said that it was necessary to drink wine in the winter in Russia on account of the climate.

After lunch we sat about informally, talking or playing with jig-saw puzzles, until at last the Grand Duchess rose, and stood, holding out her hand to be kissed, as the company filed out of the room.

The Grand Duchess had arranged for me to go to the British Embassy with the little Princesses of Greece, to see the procession bearing the Grand Duke's coffin pass by on the way to the Fortress of Peter and Paul. The route was three miles long, and the whole way soldiers and police were standing shoulder to shoulder, and back to back, in a double row, facing both ways. The Emperor and the Grand Dukes

## *Imperial Russia, 1910*

and all the Foreign Princes who had come to the funeral walked in the procession, glittering in their marvellous uniforms, while the Empress and the Grand Duchesses followed in carriages drawn by six horses, and hung on springs which made them all seasick, the ladies-in-waiting told me!

The weather was dark and gloomy and snow fell intermittently on the procession. The priests' glorious vestments were draggled at the edges where they touched the slush. Little branches of cypress were strewed on the white road.

The Czar and Grand Dukes marched gallantly, under threat of assassination, for news had been received of a probable bomb-outrage, and a penalty of 7,000 roubles had been announced for anyone daring to look out of a window. Only the British Embassy was exempt. I could not help comparing the scene with the last state funeral I had witnessed—that of Queen Victoria. The difference was tremendous. Then all was genuine sorrow, the air charged with the silent grief of a great people for the loss of a great Queen. This procession was far, far sadder, for it was utterly meaningless in spite of all the wonderful ceremonial. No one was really mourning the dead man. The atmosphere was filled, not with grief but with apprehension, not with sorrow but with doom. Already the blind, silent houses, the massed guards, and the hostile people proclaimed to all the world the inevitable passing of this tragic regime. Everyone knew, consciously or subconsciously, that there could be only one ending to it all, and that a holocaust of agony and blood. The sands were running out in February of 1910, but the end was not yet.

The two little Princesses, sisters of our Duchess of Kent, who spoke English perfectly, sat with their English nurse in the corner window, and shouted the name of everyone that passed, dancing about with glee. The Empress was crouching back in her carriage, as she went by, and seemed to be weeping, but the Grand Dukes André and Boris and the Princess Nicholas waved to us and smiled. There was an

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old superstition concerning the death of any of the Romanoffs, it appeared, according to which, when one Grand Duke died, his death would be followed by that of another within a month. The children had heard this story, and accepted it in perfect seriousness.

"There is Uncle Boris, Nannie," shouted little Princess Olga, aged six. "Why doesn't he die? When will his funeral be?"

Death to them meant nothing more than a gun-carriage covered with a magnificent golden pall, and countless horses and soldiers and banners and splendid uniforms and sights.

The description of the scene which I wrote in my journal that night ends with the words :

"Oh! how we should thank God for dear, free, safe, happy England!"

The funeral itself, which took place the next day, was too magnificent. The Grand Duchess had arranged that Mr. O'Beirne, First Secretary of the British Embassy (afterwards drowned with Lord Kitchener, when he was crossing to Russia in 1916), should bring me to the Church of Peter and Paul on the Island. As it turned out, Sir Arthur Nicholson, our Ambassador, had a cold, so Mr. O'Beirne represented him, and I thus found myself deposited in the front row with the Foreign guests and diplomats, and had a wonderful opportunity of seeing everything. I stood next Prince Henry of Prussia, who was an old friend, and who kept whispering interesting comments under his breath, though he scarcely moved his lips, and maintained an appearance of perfect decorum. It was quite an ordeal, for only a few chairs were provided for the elderly Grand Duchesses, and the rest of the company had to stand still throughout the whole ceremony, which lasted four hours.

The Emperor stood about ten feet away from me with the Grand Duchess Anastasia, the daughter of the dead Grand Duke, beside him. The Empress had apparently refused to be present. I was struck by his remarkable resemblance to

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King George, but his face lacked the friendly expression of our King, and seemed to be unnaturally composed, as though he wore a mask.

I was immensely impressed by the wonderful discipline of all these Russian nobles. Throughout the long tiring service they all stood like statues, men and women alike, gazing at the catafalque, which reminded me of an immense four-poster bed, draped in gold and silver brocades ; no one shuffled or fidgeted or coughed. I glanced backwards once, I fear, as I wanted to take in the effect of those gorgeous uniforms framed against the black dresses of the forty ladies-in-waiting, whose mourning crêpe was also slashed with the scarlet ribbons and sparkling diamonds of an imperial order. Tall lighted candles had been handed round and were held by each person present, and the total effect was quite wonderful.

As a Protestant, I did not have to face the added ordeal of holding a heavy candle for all those hours.

"What a mercy we are Protestants, and are spared this at least," whispered Prince Henry as the candles were distributed.

Six motionless guards, all officers of the late Grand Duke's Regiment, stood round the bier. I was not aware that I noticed them particularly, but ten years afterwards in Paris, I recognized one of them (then Regent of Finland), so deeply had his handsome features become graven on my memory during that interminable ceremony.

At the end came the crowning ordeal for the Emperor and his family, for they marched slowly past the coffin and bent in turn to kiss the face of the dead man, embalmed thirteen days before.

I have described this commencement of my stay in Russia in some detail, so as to give a picture of this interesting, tragic, but in so many ways delightful society which has now alas ! completely passed away. I cannot speak too highly of the good manners and courtesy of all the members of the Russian Court Circle, both men and women. Throughout the six months of my visit I received nothing but the kindest

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treatment from everyone ; they were not merely polite, they were friendly, and even affectionate when I came to know them better, and I was shown every possible consideration. One day the Emperor gave orders to have the Winter Palace opened, for no other reason than that I might see it, and I was escorted over it by two Grand Dukes and several A.D.C.'s and felt quite overcome by the honour. All the people I met vied with each other to provide helpful details and material for my book *His Hour* which I wrote during my stay, and which contains as accurate a picture as I could make of the whole society. The Grand Duke George chose all the Russian names to be used in the book, and every character in it is a recognizable portrait of some member of this circle.

At first I could not find anyone whose type inspired me for the part of the hero, for the Russian men have not the strange attraction of the women. It was not till I had been there a month that Princess Nicholas of Greece—she was always called the Grand Duchess Helène in Russia—who was having tea with me in my apartment in the Hotel, proposed that I should describe Prince Gritzko Witgenstein, who had been killed in a duel not long before. The ladies-in-waiting were delighted, and all began to recount tales of his escapades, and of his wicked fascinating ways, and to bewail his sad death. There was nothing, apparently, that he dared not do, whether it required plain physical bravery or sheer audacity. The tale of how he lowered the gipsy girl who had defied him over the balcony of a restaurant into the soup-tureen of the innocent bourgeois party dining below, which I put into the film version of *His Hour*, was much more exciting in reality than the expurgated edition which I put into the book. The lady was not respectably clothed as I made her appear in the film, but *sans rien* !

I felt much inspired by the idea of making Gritzko my hero, but was rather at a loss, because all my personal chronicles of him were locked in my Egyptian journal which I had left in Essex. I could, of course, have written about him

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from memory, but pressing letters from my lawyer—some fresh bills of Clayton's had apparently come in unexpectedly—made it necessary for me to go back to England and cope with the new position, and to obtain an advance payment on account of the new book from my long-suffering publisher, Gerald Duckworth.

I therefore seized upon the excuse of my need for the journal to enable me to return to London for a few days, but I promised to be back in St. Petersburg within a week, in time for the great balls and entertainments which were to be given in honour of the visit of the King of Bulgaria in the middle of February and which I was determined not to miss.

I was much congratulated by my Russian friends, when I reappeared amongst them, for having successfully performed the feat of getting from Russia to England and back within a week in the middle of February. Actually there was more reason for congratulation than any of them knew—or perhaps I should say any but one, for undoubtedly someone must have known what would happen to me on that journey which was actually the most terrifyingly exciting adventure of my life.

On looking back upon the whole series of events from this safe distance I am all the more struck by the cleverness of the scheme, which if it had succeeded would have avoided the awkward inquiries which would presumably have followed had my disappearance taken place in Russia, under the nose of the British Ambassador. In Warsaw I was unknown, and, as I was only supposed to be passing through in the train, the British authorities there were unaware of my presence in the country and some days would elapse before inquiries would be made by my friends either in Russia or in England. Clayton would naturally imagine that I had delayed my departure from Russia and would wait a day or two for news before getting really alarmed. In Russia it would be thought that I was safe in England and no anxiety would be felt if I did not return for some time. The exact time and place of

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my demise would thus have been extremely difficult to trace had the plan been successful and blame would not easily have been attached to anyone in Russia. Everything pointed to a deep-laid and carefully prepared plot, but to whom I owed the honour of these remarkable attentions I have never known for certain, although I can perhaps guess. I have often longed to know what really lay behind the strange affair into which I stumbled so unsuspectingly.

Whether or no my guesses are right, this is the true story of what occurred.

I had not visited Moscow on my way out to St. Petersburg, and my kind Russian friends therefore suggested that I should spend the day in sightseeing there on my way back to London, catching the night train from Moscow to Warsaw so as to waste no time. I was delighted to agree, as I wanted very much to get an impression of the city before writing my book, and I was told that messages would be sent to the keepers of the various palaces and museums instructing them to give me special facilities for seeing over them.

I was not surprised, therefore, when an official, supposedly sent from the Vladimir Palace, called at my hotel, and explained to me that all arrangements had been made, not merely for my visit to Moscow, but also for my whole journey. I merely thought it extremely kind of the Grand Duchess to take so much trouble about my comfort.

"A sleeper has been reserved on the night train from Moscow to Warsaw," said the man, "And a room has been booked for you at the Hotel de l'Europe, where you will stay the night, as the best train for Berlin leaves the next morning."

I wrote all this down so that there could be no mistake.

"In case there should be no cabs available at the station on arrival at Warsaw, a special carriage has been ordered to meet your train there and take you to the Hotel."

I thought this wonderfully thoughtful, and suspected nothing strange. He handed me my tickets, sleeping-car supplement, etc., as far as Warsaw, and said that I should

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find the tickets from there to Berlin awaiting me at the Hotel de l'Europe.

I thanked him sincerely for the great trouble that he had taken to ensure the comfort of my journey, and he bowed, kissed my hand, and left.

The thought crossed my mind after he had gone that it was strange that I had never seen him before, as I knew most of the Court officials by sight by now ; but I assumed that this was an underling who did not appear in the Palace.

This was the first journey, since my girlhood days, on which I had ever set out quite unaccompanied. I had always had a maid with me before, but by a peculiar coincidence my English maid who had travelled with me to Russia had been taken ill soon after arrival and I had been obliged to send her home. She thought it was the cold climate and the hot rooms which upset her, but whatever it was, she got ill again every time she recovered from one attack, and I feared appendicitis, in those days still considered a dangerous illness. Other explanations came to my mind when I came to think everything over. The Russian maid who had been found for me I did not much like, and I had determined, for the sake of economy, to travel alone.

On arrival at Moscow any vague misgivings which I may have felt were set at rest by the discovery that the promised instructions for me to be given every facility for sightseeing had been sent to Moscow from the proper quarter. I was greeted wherever I went by bowing officials and given every honour. I had always received this wonderfully kind treatment in St. Petersburg, where to my great astonishment each policeman seemed to know my carriage by sight, and usually held up the traffic for me to pass. The tickets reserving in my name a sleeper on the train to Warsaw that night, which had been handed to me by the strange official, also proved to be quite in order, and I was not disturbed on reaching the Polish frontier.

When I arrived at Warsaw the next evening, it was dark.

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There seemed to be no porters about, and I was obliged to carry my own dressing-case, which was fortunately all the luggage that I was taking—an amusing contrast to my tiger-skin days, born of my American experiences. Waiting outside the station I found a single carriage drawn up; there were no other cabs in sight. It boasted two quite good horses, and there were two men on the box in plain clothes. The one beside the coachman got down and came up to me, bowed obsequiously, and said in what seemed to me a very Russian voice:

“ Madame Glyn ? ”

I nodded, and feeling quite at ease, got into the carriage, which I naturally supposed to be the one which the official in St. Petersburg had promised to order for me. The man did not ask me where to go, but remounted the box and we drove off. At first I sat back in my seat not paying much attention to the streets as I was very tired after my day's sightseeing and long journey. After a time I began to feel alarmed, however, for I noticed that we were going very fast, and were passing through a sparsely populated part of the town. I felt sure that such streets could not be leading to the Hotel de l'Europe. A dreadful sense of apprehension swept over me, and I wondered what to do. Clearly there must be some mistake, I thought at first, and imagined that this could not after all be the carriage which had been ordered for me. Yet the man on the box had mentioned my name and there had been no other carriage visible at the station. It was all very peculiar and I began to feel really frightened. I remembered with a pang of horror that the official who had made the arrangements had not been one of those whom I knew. Was it possible that he had not come from the Palace at all? Could someone have impersonated a Palace official? Had the Grand Duchess never intended to arrange anything more than the Moscow permits, as I had originally understood, and the man who saw me have been a complete impostor? This was much the most likely thing, although I still found

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it hard to believe that anyone would take so much trouble to do away with me. I determined to save myself if I could, and I opened the window and yelled at the coachman. "Hotel de l'Europe" I shouted again and again.

He paid no attention, but instead, whipped up his horses so that we should travel too fast for me to be able to get out of the carriage without injury. I could see in the dim light reflected from the snow that we were passing out of the town, and should soon be in the open country. Clearly there was no "mistake". I was not intended to reach the Hotel de l'Europe that night.

I leaned as far as I could out of the window, regardless of the bitter frosty air which whipped my cheeks, and screamed and screamed as loudly as I could. There seemed to be no one in sight and I began to give up hope. Then suddenly I heard shouts from behind me, and the carriage pulled up. Two men in uniform, Polish police I supposed, appeared, and a long altercation ensued between them and the two men on the box. At last the man who had met me got off the carriage, and one of the gendarmes got up in his place. He made the coachman turn the horses round and drive back into the town, and at last we arrived at the Hotel de l'Europe. There he got down and helped me out of the carriage. I was glad of his support for I was feeling distinctly weak about the knees. He put his finger to his lips with a significant look, and bowing, returned to the carriage I had left and mounting the box once more drove off.

I was not at all surprised to find that the hotel had received no instructions whatever from St. Petersburg to reserve a room for me, as I had not been intended to reach it. It was completely full and there were no rooms to be had nor was any sleeper reserved for me on the Berlin express. The astonished porter explained that the train for Germany left that night, in about an hour, and not the next morning as I had been told by the bogus Russian official. I hurried back to the station, where, to my unspeakable joy, I caught sight

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of Lord Somerleyton (then Sir Savile Crossley) and flung myself at him, craving his protection for the rest of my journey. The kind man made his servant give up his sleeper to me, and too tired even to wonder what would happen to the poor valet, I climbed into the Express extremely grateful to be alive.

While I was in London I told Lord Redesdale about my adventure. He advised me not to return to Russia if I could help it, as it was a mysterious place, and evidently there was someone there—and someone powerful at that—who found me in the way. In any event he advised me strongly to say nothing about my adventure. I told him that I was bound to go back, or I could not finish the book which I had undertaken to deliver on a certain date, and finding me determined, he promised to go to the Foreign Office and ask them to look after me as much as possible.

Perhaps as a result of his kind offices my journey back to St. Petersburg was quite uneventful ; I was given the warmest welcome by everyone on my return and proceeded to forget my gruesome experience in a whirl of gaiety.

I did not tell my dear Grand Duchess of my adventure, realizing that she could know nothing about it and that I should only embarrass her by mentioning it. Nothing but trouble could follow disclosure, I plainly saw, and after all, why should I complain, considering that adventures of all sorts were what I had visited this strange country to seek ?

## CHAPTER XVIII

*More Adventures in Russia*

I SUPPOSE that no ceremonies will ever again be so magnificent as the pre-War entertainments and balls given at the Russian Imperial Court, and I am so very glad that I had the remarkable privilege of seeing them before they came to an end.

There is a dignity and simplicity about the ceremonies of the English Court which is, of course, unequalled anywhere in the world, and the feathered headdress and veil give an almost bridal air to every debutante which greatly adds to the beauty of the whole spectacle ; but the grandeur of the Russian Court functions was impressive in a totally different way. The glittering uniforms of *all* the men, and the astonishing jewels of the women, made a positively dazzling show, and the elaborate pomp and ceremonial was gorgeous to the extreme. The wildest "Cinderella" dreams of my childhood were amply fulfilled by the wonderful entertainments which I attended in St. Petersburg in February and March of 1910.

Besides the official functions in honour of the King of Bulgaria I was taken to numbers of amusing private balls and parties, and I enjoyed these far more, of course, than the formal State ceremonies. The general atmosphere of some of these more intimate affairs was one of wild hilarity and irresponsibility. It was considered fun to rush out to the Islands in sleighs over the frozen Neva, in the middle of a ball ; or else there would be gay "little" parties after the Ballet, at Count Orlovski's "Salon de l'Ambassade de

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Pologne ", where we ate *écrevisses* and drank punch until the small hours. Bed was never dreamed of before four or five o'clock in the morning, but the whole atmosphere was so exhilarating that at the time I seem to have felt no fatigue, though I doubt whether I could have kept up the rush for long without getting ill.

It was a great consolation to be able to discard black clothes at last, and to fetch out of their cupboards my lovely Lucile dresses which had been so long put away and neglected. I felt that my extravagances had been justified after all.

The Grand Duchess Vladimir—whom I called “my” Grand Duchess—did not take part in any of these gaieties, for she was still in mourning for her husband ; but after every party she would send for me and make me tell her everything that had happened, chuckling with pleasure, or commenting with deep insight upon every detail.

She had a very highly cultivated and far-seeing mind, with a delightful sense of humour, and was adored by everyone. She was looked upon as the real Empress of Russia from a social point of view, for the Czarina never emerged from her retirement at Tzarskoe Selo, and was in any case too intensely unpopular to have had any influence upon the social life of the Court.

One amusing adventure which I had was arranged for me by my Grand Duchess. If it had not been for her part in it, I think I should have thought twice about accepting the invitation, remembering the alarming episode in Poland. As it turned out I was again in considerable danger—but not of my life !

I had been saying that I must see a typical Russian country house as I needed to describe one in my book, and she had promised to arrange a visit for me. One night at a glorious private ball given for the King of Bulgaria by the Countess Chuvalov, Monsieur Izvolski, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, came up to me, and with great formality presented an exceedingly handsome young man in a splendid uniform.



The Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia, 1910



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"Madame," he said, without the sign of a smile, "I have her Imperial Highness' orders to present to you this gentleman, who will conduct you to see a country house at Peterhof to-morrow morning."

I had no choice but to agree, and certainly my allotted companion looked most agreeable. He would call at my hotel at 6 a.m., he said, and I hurried away from the party, only just in time to change out of my ball dress into my travelling clothes. My handsome cavalier arrived punctually at six, and we went to the station, where we took the train to Peterhof, a journey of about three hours. It was necessary to start so early, he explained, because there was a long drive by *troika* to the house, and at this time of year it would not be safe to risk making the return journey after the daylight had faded. We ought to start back, therefore, well before two o'clock. He told me the history of the house, which he said had belonged to Potemkin, the friend of the Great Catherine, and had many stories attached to it.

The *troika* which awaited us was a very grand one, lined with crimson velvet and filled with an enormous padded velvet rug bordered with fur. The coachman's padded livery was also of crimson velvet embroidered with silver, and his belt and even the reins were all to match. The three horses looked magnificent in their silver-mounted harness, and as usual in a *troika* the two outside ones cantered all the way, although the one between the shafts under the high wooden arch on which were fixed the sleigh bells, trotted quite sedately. The coachman in a *troika* stands up to drive, holding a rein in either hand, so that the general effect is that of a Roman chariot, only more ornate and barbaric looking. It is a splendidly romantic vehicle, but in most cases leave a good deal to be desired!

The road was appalling, and as we got farther out into the country the outside horses were often floundering in deep, soft snow. We were nearly upset—or so I imagined—dozens of times, and were mercilessly bumped about, which

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gave my companion plenty of opportunity to hold on to me tightly ! I was genuinely relieved when we reached the house and was, I am afraid, too worn out physically by the tiring journey on top of a night without sleep, to appreciate the gallant conversation of my handsome companion. I annoyed him very much by insisting upon seeing over the house, which we were shown round by an enormous footman with tousled hair, but a grand manner. After all, this *was* the object of my journey although he did not seem to think so !

The place itself disappointed me, as the furniture was horribly mid-Victorian and there seemed to be little atmosphere of the past, but I was very pleased to have an opportunity of seeing the country estate of a Russian noble at all, as it was rare for foreigners to be invited to do so, particularly in mid-winter. I have described the whole place minutely in *His Hour*, and only repeat here that the thing which struck me most, I am afraid, was the terrible inadequacy of the sanitary arrangements !

We started back soon after lunch as a snowstorm was threatening and the light was beginning to fail. The storm broke after we had travelled only two or three versts, and the rest of the journey was really terrible. We crouched under the fur rug, thrown about in every direction as we floundered on through the blinding snow over the fast-disappearing road.

Needless to say, my companion found it necessary to keep me safe and warm by clasping me in his arms, while he poured a mixture of Russian swear-words, when we came to the bumps, and endearing sentences in French, into my bewildered and somewhat frozen ear. I was too utterly exhausted to care what I did, and I fell fast asleep on his shoulder for the last half of the journey in the sleigh !

The snow-storm scene which I put into *His Hour* was not hard to imagine after this experience. If my charming companion had been Gritzko, instead of a well-drilled officer of

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the Emperor's Guards, acting on instructions from the Grand Duchess, I am sure that I should have met the same fate as my heroine Tamara, and have spent the night alone in a hut with him instead of safely back in my hotel !

I found a message there asking me to visit the Grand Duchess at nine-thirty the next morning, an unusually early hour, set, I felt sure, in order to obtain prompt assurances of my safe return from my adventure. I presented myself duly, looking, I have no doubt, as dissipated as if I had really been out all night. The Grand Duchess was still in her lovely white bedroom, a masseuse at work upon her ankle.

"Now, at once, tell me all about it !" she commanded, a merry twinkle in her eye. I think she was secretly relieved to see me back, safe and sound, after such a storm. We spoke in a mixture of English and French unhampered by the presence of the Russian masseuse. I told her the whole story of our journey and of the young Prince's assiduous care for my comfort, especially in the sleigh ! " *Assez sage ?*" she questioned, whimsically. " *Comme un ange, Altresse,*" I reassured her, and the dear lady laughed in her stately way. I can see the picture now, her minute, bare foot, propped upon white silk pillows—the sturdy, hideous Russian woman impassively treating her ankle, while close by us, in a white lacquered show case, reposed upon black velvet stands, thousands of pounds worth of pearls, both black and white, and quantities of magnificent diamonds.

"I had them put out to show you," she said, seeing my glances turned in the direction of the case, and added : "I cannot look at the coloured stones while I am in mourning."

"*Quelle délicatesse, Madame,*" I was able to reply as I smothered my smiles, and overcome by the thought that there must no doubt be equal quantities of priceless sapphires and rubies put away in the safe concealed in the wall.

What a superbly fairy-story Princess was my Grand Duchess Marie !

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I never had the opportunity while I was in Russia to see any life except that of the Court circle, so my picture even of the purely social world is of course quite incomplete. I did not attempt to discover anything about other aspects of the country and its problems, as I had a feeling that it would not be quite honourable to do so. Since I was the guest of the Grand Duchess Vladimir and was eating her salt, or that of her friends, and was being shown every possible kindness, I felt that it would be mean of me to try to investigate those things which I was not intended to see.

One morning, however, I chanced to look out of the window at nine o'clock, hearing the sound of cracking whips. I was generally fast asleep at that hour, after only four hours in bed, and as it was hardly light before ten I had never looked into the street so early before. I saw about thirty absolutely wretched looking men and women clad only in thin rags of clothes despite the bitter weather, being driven along by Cossacks on horseback. They were not actually touching them with their whips, but were merely keeping them together, like whippers-in with a pack of hounds. Later I asked one of the head men in the office of the hotel what this scene could have meant.

"They are merely turning out those foolish people who have come into the city without a passport," he said.

"Out into the marshland in this weather, and with no shelter?" I asked.

The man shrugged his shoulders. "They had no right to come in—*Que voulez-vous?* But if I might advise Madame, it would be well for her not to look from her window—the climate is so very treacherous, she might take cold."

I did not again unclose my eyelids until after ten o'clock! I thought of the snowy wastes into which the poor creatures were being driven and of how narrowly I had missed sharing the same fate. Apart from a question of keeping faith with my kind hostess, this was a country, I realized, in which it was very unsafe to know too much, or to hold strong opinions,

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whether about politics or individuals. Discretion is at all times the better part of valour if you are an Englishwoman travelling alone, and do not wish to become a nuisance to your Government or the cause of some unfortunate diplomatic "incident".

But what a strange, sad country is Russia, and what strange sad people its inhabitants must be, thus to endure through century after century this unspeakable, relentless tyranny and heedlessness of human life and suffering. The races of this part of the world seem never to have been baptized with the spirit of freedom which belongs to the nations of the West. This is not due to cowardice, but to a complete failure to grasp the doctrine of the eternal value and dignity of the individual human soul, which is the fundamental basis of all Christian ethics.

It is not true to say that Christianity has been swept away in modern Soviet Russia ; the truth is that it can never have existed there. The saint-like expression of the bearded peasants with their grave eyes and striking resemblance to the portraits of the apostles seems to have misled many into believing that Russians before the War were a deeply Christian and devout people. Devout, yes, but Christian, no. To watch a service in progress in the great cathedrals and to see these poor, superstitious creatures pressing forward to kiss the filthy, disease-encrusted glass of some hideous gilded Ikon was to realize how much more akin were their religious beliefs to the immemorial superstitions and mystic practices of the East than to any Christian creed. This is not to deny the true Christianity of the Greek Orthodox teaching, but merely to deny that its real message was understood or believed in by any large proportion of the people. The Gospel of Christ has yet to be adopted by the peoples of Russia, although their nominal adherence to the Church extends further back than our own, and their mystic faculties would seem to be specially adapted for the appreciation of non-material realities. The adoption of Materialism as a

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creed by modern Russia is one of the most complete anachronisms in the history of thought, and it cannot, one would imagine, remain for very long the philosophy of this essentially mystic and visionary people.

The courage of the Russian soldiers in battle was amply proved during the War. In spite of the pitiable lack of equipment of the men, half a dozen of whom often shared a single rifle, regiment after regiment would obey orders to attack the fully armed German troops, advancing in the face of machine-gun fire to destroy the enemy with cold steel or even with their bare hands, and the most fearful slaughter could not deter them. Yet the Russian people as a whole have always been, and still remain, dumb driven cattle where their own rulers are concerned, and seem to be most contented when most completely bullied. Rare revolutions against one form of the endless tyranny serve merely to throw up a yet more terrible oppression, while each leader in turn, whether Czar or Dictator, resorts to the age-old methods of government in Russia, namely terrorism, implemented by a ruthless and brutal secret police and backed by a colossal army. It will be interesting for future generations to see whether the Slav peoples are ever able to throw off their characteristic inability to grasp and hold the golden apple of freedom and to mingle with their modern ideals of material progress some less prehistoric conception of government and social organization than the plain tyranny which they have so long endured.

I am speaking, of course, only of the Russian masses in this connection ; but even the pre-revolution nobles and their families whom I had such a unique opportunity of studying, seemed to me, when I got to know them better, to be at a totally different stage of civilization to our own. No one who knows only the charming cosmopolitan Russians to be met with in Europe, or who has seen, as I have seen, alas, in Hollywood, these selfsame Russian nobles with their proud nature buried deep beneath the awful ice of poverty in a

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democratic land, can imagine the curious impression of primitiveness and orientalism which was produced by living amongst them in their pre-War splendour.

I have tried to express in the last chapter my very great appreciation of the kindness which I was shown by everyone in Russia, and my first impression of the men was undoubtedly one of agreeable surprise at the high level of intelligence, courtesy and disciplined behaviour which they maintained on all public and social occasions, however tedious or trying. My lasting impression of the women is that of their great charm, dignity, and complete naturalness. But after a time I came to realize that, in spite of the superficial polish brought about by the strict military etiquette, and the impression of intelligence and erudition given by the universal mastery of several foreign languages, the majority of the Russian nobles whom I met were at heart very primitive, and the standards of their private lives were scarcely comparable with those of the educated classes of any other nation which I have visited. Count Joseph Potocki, a Pole, and therefore free from the peculiar, Oriental outlook of the Russians, told me—and I could well believe it—that the men, even in this highest circle of society, were often really brutal to the women and treated them in a way which no stranger would believe possible in a civilized country.

No doubt the enormous amount of wine and of vodka consumed had something to do with this. As in England in the eighteenth century, it was a commonplace, if not a custom in Russia, before the War, for young men to get completely drunk night after night, and parties of officers would often go off together with a bunch of chorus girls and indulge in drunken orgies lasting two or three days. I was told by a cynical old Russian Ambassador that since the Japanese War, and the semi-revolution of 1905, the younger men had been kept so hard at their military duties that they had very little time for society pleasures, and thus preferred to spend their leisure in the company of actresses

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and demi-mondaines who would not waste their time with too many preliminaries !

I gained the impression that this was very true from the lament of many of the older women for the passing of the gay old days " before the war " (the Japanese war) when there were plenty of young men about, ready and willing to pay suitable attentions to lovely ladies of the *beau monde*.

Unsteady gait or other signs of drink were scornfully looked upon while ladies were present, however (this was perhaps an additional reason for avoiding their company !) and I saw no signs of intoxication during my six months in Russia such as I have often witnessed in America. Nevertheless, my early experience of the effects of the habit of heavy drinking gained from my brother-in-law, James Wallace, led me to believe that the majority of the tales that I heard about the drinking habits of the men were true.

My son-in-law, Sir Rhys Williams, who after he was wounded in France, in September 1915, went out to Persia as Military Attaché and spent several months with the Caucasus Expeditionary Force under General Baratoff, tells me that even on active service and amongst officers of the highest rank, the drinking went on just the same. Baratoff himself never took any alcohol, but many of the Generals and Staff Officers under his command were regularly drunk by six o'clock every evening, and one of his chief officers was on one occasion carried to bed by his men, unconscious with drink, twice within twenty-four hours.

Count Potocki agreed with me that the women as a whole were far more intelligent and more sensitive than the men and their ideas approached more nearly to the Western-European point of view. All of them, however, seemed to suffer from a deep underneath melancholy, and appeared to be searching for something occult, always drawn towards the mystic or mysterious in everything. Gaiety was a kind of intoxication, not a natural emotion with them, and I was much struck by the curious way in which a wave of gloom would suddenly

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sweep over a party, to be succeeded just as abruptly by a burst of wild hilarity. Nothing ever seemed to be settled or balanced, although the immense charm possessed by almost every Russian lady prevented any feeling of irritation such as would have been caused by such moodiness in the women of any other nation.

Vice of other sorts was, I believe, almost unknown in pre-War Russia, and there was a singular lack of hypocrisy about the whole society which was very delightful. The Russian ladies of the Court circle—who were the only ones whom I had any opportunity of knowing—were the most perfectly natural people I have ever met, and they rarely if ever spoke unkindly about each other. There seemed to be no snobbery or social jealousy of any sort. This may have been due to the fact that social climbing was impossible, since there was no overlapping of the different grades of society as there seems to be everywhere to-day, and thus no possibility of either rising or sinking in the social world. Wealth was not taken into consideration at all, as far as I could see, and quite poor ladies-in-waiting were treated in just the same friendly way as the wives and daughters of the greatest nobles. The members of any particular set had all known each other since childhood and airs and graces were therefore quite out of place. Within the circle of the Imperial Court the relationships were like those between members of a large family in which everyone knows everyone else intimately, and the members of the same generation considered each other as equals regardless of rank, although Court etiquette was observed towards the members of the Imperial family itself. They did not bother with anyone who did not please them, and although they were perfectly polite to foreigners of distinction on all formal occasions, if they did not find them amusing or attractive personally they left them severely alone at other times. I never saw any strangers at the intimate little private parties. One Ambassador's wife told me with grief that she never went out except in the diplomatic circle.

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The Russian nobles were like children who behave well when they are obliged to go downstairs to be introduced to guests, but who do as they please in their own nurseries.

Poor tragic children! They did not seem to me to deserve the terrible fate which overtook most of them only a few years later. Among all the many noble ladies whom I met I do not remember one who was not interested in charities of all kinds, and there was none of the niggardliness in subscribing which I afterwards found in France, or the ostentatious patronage which I had seen in America. The Russian ladies appeared to be kind and good to their servants and dependants, were never stupidly arrogant, and in their lives gave little enough cause for the rage and hate which was felt for them by the Bolsheviks. The causes of the Revolution were doubtless many and the wrongs deep, but I am certain that the private lives of those on whom the blow fell had little to do with the final upheaval.

The tragic and terrible exception to this general exoneration was, undoubtedly, the poor Empress herself. I was shocked to find that her unpopularity amounted to hatred, even as early as 1910. Because of her English descent I felt a natural sympathy for her, and at first I would have liked to defend her if I had dared. But gradually I came round to the general view of her as the evil genius of the country.

Her refusal to appear in public, or when she did, to appear weeping, or crouching back petrified with fear, as I had seen her in the funeral procession of the Grand Duke on my arrival, seemed to be her most terrible mistake. In justice, I believe that her fears were for the Emperor, not for herself, but the effect was just as lamentable.

"An Empress has no right to nerves," my Grand Duchess flashed back at a lady-in-waiting who offered this explanation for the exhibition which the Czarina had made of herself in the procession. It might have been Grandmamma speaking, and I heartily agreed with her.

I became very friendly with Mr. and Madame Izvolski

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(the Minister for Foreign Affairs) while I was in Russia, and later when he was Ambassador in Paris we renewed our friendship. After the terrible massacre of the Imperial family, he and Madame Izvolski escaped to Paris and he told me many things which the Grand Duchess and her ladies were far too loyal to let me hear when I was in Russia.

Izvolski said that the poor Emperor was a very nice man, with genuinely good intentions and capable of being friendly and human when not under the influence of the Empress, who from the first seemed to shed an atmosphere of unhappiness and dread over the whole Court. He would have liked to have enjoyed the companionship of the ladies of the Court, but the Empress would not allow it, keeping him always alone with her at Tsarskoe Selo and encouraging, as his only relaxation, regimental dinners with men, at which much too much wine was drunk, to the detriment of his health.

She was, of course, strongly reactionary in her politics, and in her latter years seems to have imagined herself a second Catherine. She appeared to have a positive hatred for the Russian people, and to have determined to flout all their prejudices from the beginning.

I asked him to tell me the truth about Rasputin. He said that he had originally been brought to the Court by the Duchess of Leuchtenberg who was a Montenegrin. The Empress at that time had a great friendship with one of her ladies-in-waiting. This lady fell under the spell of Rasputin, who had undoubtedly some strong mesmeric power, and she became his mistress. She then introduced him to the Czarina who also fell under his influence completely and believed that he could cure her son. The whole story is too appalling, and only madness will explain it.

Izvolski told me of the dreadful calamity which occurred in Moscow during the celebration of the Coronation ceremonies. Hundreds of poor people were crushed to death in a panic which occurred amongst the crowds at the barriers awaiting admittance to the town. He had seen it all himself

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the next morning, and said it was the most horrible sight imaginable. There was no blood to be seen, but this seemed only to make it worse. At every one of the fifty turnstiles was a mound of ghastly white-faced corpses of men, women and children.

It is strange to remember that exactly the same tragedy occurred in Paris during the festivities of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette; but the horror of it all was greatly aggravated in Russia because the Emperor and Empress paid not the slightest attention to what had happened, and appeared that night and actually *danced* at a Ball given by the French Embassy! Izvolski said that the French Ambassador, who was an intelligent and humane woman, wanted to put off the Ball, but that the Ambassador would not allow her to do so as their Majesties had intimated their intention to be present and *had not cancelled the arrangement*.

Another curious little omen occurred during the coronation ceremony, and had a great effect upon the superstitious Grand Dukes. The famous collar of St. Andrew round the Emperor's neck suddenly broke, and one of the large diamond links fell to the ground. Izvolski himself who was one of the six chamberlains holding the Czar's ermine cloak, had to stoop and pick it up and hand it to the Grand Duke Vladimir who stood behind, and who was much upset by the occurrence.

There is much more that I could tell of Russia, which I revisited again in the summer of 1910, taking with me on this occasion my daughter Margot. She became a great favourite of my Grand Duchess and her family, and enjoyed her visit immensely, in spite of the perpetual Court mourning—for King Edward this time—which obliged even the poor child to go about in a heavy crêpe veil! I read aloud the finished book, *His Hour*, to the assembled Court, and was much encouraged by their praise, and by their charmingly expressed appreciation of the efforts I had made to picture their society accurately and sympathetically.

Most of what I could still write concerns personalities of

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the Imperial Court, many of whom have passed away, some in a tragic manner, and I realize that these details are now of interest only to historians. My diaries are available for this purpose, but I will not relate any more of Russia here, but will pass on instead to some of the well-known English personalities who seemed to exist in such numbers in the "good old days before the War."

CHAPTER XIX

*Some Pre-War Personalities*

**E**XCEPT for the Russian interlude in 1910, and the trip through Italy in 1911, the period from 1908 until the War was, as I have said, not a very happy one for me, but it had many compensations, one of the greatest of which was the discovery of many wonderful friends, who, although I had known some of them for years, were brought much more into my life by their kind sympathy with my various troubles.

Of the members of the Glyn family I shall always remember with deep affection Colonel Geoffrey Carr Glyn, who acted as my Trustee, and was my comforter in many trials. He had the genius for friendship which goes with a kind heart and a brave and merry soul, and those who sincerely mourned his death a year or two ago must have been numbered by the hundred, and drawn from every walk of life and from most parts of the globe.

One of my kindest supporters was Mary, Duchess of Abercorn, one of the most perfect great ladies whom England ever produced, clever, gentle-mannered, witty, and understanding. I met her first in Cairo and was devoted to her for many years until her death, which occurred while I was in America.

Minnie, Lady (Arthur) Paget, was another delightful person whom I loved. She knew how to entertain and mix people better than anyone I have ever met, and her house in Belgrave Square was the centre of all that was most chic in English and Anglo-American society.

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She produced some *tableaux vivants* once, I remember, years ago, in which one of the scenes was an imaginary picture by Titian called "The five senses". Five red-haired ladies were chosen, each one to represent one of the senses—sight, hearing and so on. They were Lady Mary Sackville, Baroness d'Erlanger, Lady St. Oswald, Mrs. Curzon and myself. We all of us had very brilliant red hair, but Beerbohm Tree, who was supervising the show at His Majesty's, thought that an even more brilliant effect would be produced under the strong lights if the hair of those in front was powdered with copper powder. I can see him now waving the box at me, and saying, "Beautiful Medici poisoner—that is what you are! I am going to make you lovelier still!"

I have no doubt that the effect was marvellous at the time, but imagine our horror when we discovered that night that the skin of our heads had turned emerald green! It was only with the greatest difficulty, after hours of washing with oil, that we were able to get the verdigris off.

The only other occasion on which I performed on the stage of a real theatre was also with the invaluable help of Minnie Paget, and this time with the professional advice of Sir Charles Hawtrey. This was in the summer of 1908, after my return from America, when I had the amazing temerity, as it seems to me now, to act "the Lady" in the play of *Three Weeks* myself, in the wild hope of proving, to my friends at any rate, that there was nothing "improper" in the story, and that it was worthy of consideration as the serious tragedy which I had intended it to be and sincerely felt that it was.

The idea had been suggested to me not long after my return from my first visit to America, by the Grand Duchess Cyril of Russia, who understood my idea of the story, and thought that the best way of vindicating my point of view was to act it myself at a private performance. Another motive in finally deciding to do it was the hope of getting the play put on in London, and this object would have been achieved

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but for the Censor, for I received a handsome offer for the rights of the play directly after the performance and actually signed the contract for a West End production with a well-known Actor-Manager. For family reasons concerning Clayton I was in need of money at the time, and the Censor's action was a bitter blow. As everyone knows who saw my version of the play, there was nothing censorable in it from beginning to end, and none of my friends could understand what lay behind the refusal, which was made without any explanation whatever. We only had ten days to rehearse our parts, and as Sir Charles Hawtrey told the professional members of the cast, obviously I could not learn to be an actress in that time, so must be allowed to act just how it seemed best to me, the rest of the actors falling in with me as well as they could. Comforted by this injunction I did not worry about rules and simply acted the part as I felt it. No doubt the result left much to be desired, but it had the effect of convincing many people that I had no intention of writing an improper story when I wrote *Three Weeks*.

My sister's shop, Lucile, made the most lovely dresses for me, designed of course by her, and which certainly helped a great deal to make it a success. Aubrey Smith acted the part of Sir Charles, and all the cast and the staff of the theatre were more than kind to me, realizing how pathetically in earnest I was over the whole thing.

One of the people who came to this performance was Lord Curzon, whom I had met before once or twice, but had not known well, having been frightened away by his famous reputation for being a "very superior person". I had always had a great admiration for his beautiful wife, and had felt a sincere sympathy for him in his great grief at her death.

He came to this performance of *Three Weeks*, and afterwards sent me the kindest note of real appreciation, not merely of my acting, but also of my courage in attempting to vindicate myself in this way. I was greatly touched and

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cheered by this letter, and felt that he must be far more human than I had supposed.

Later I came to know him much better, and to appreciate the real greatness of his character still more, although I never felt that I understood him really. Like all his friends, I was dazzled by his marvellous brain, and by his delightful outbursts of humour and fun ; irritated by his contemptuous manner and assumption of natural superiority in every known respect and on every occasion ; yet at the same time filled with admiration at his extraordinary industry and his consuming desire to serve his country to the uttermost limit of his tremendous capacity, and in all possible directions.

My whole conception of the duty of the individual to the state, of man to humanity, was profoundly changed by my friendship with Lord Curzon. Hitherto, I had pictured my ideal hero as a charming, cultivated, attractive creature, occupied principally with sport, possessing a dilettante interest in art and literature, caring for his estate, of course, and fulfilling the not-too-exacting duties of his rank and station—perhaps even willing to go into Parliament for a few years ; but devoted primarily and continuously to the service of the lady of his heart ! The heroes of my books up to this period were all of this type, and were, I expect, unconsciously modelled upon the original of “Sir Anthony Thornhirst” in *The Reflections of Ambrosine*, who had represented to me the beau-ideal of an English gentleman in those leisurely days. Now I came to realize that there was more for a man to do in the world than to fall in love with a beautiful woman and live happily ever after. I came to understand that charm and gallantry are not enough, and that true romance inhabits nobler mansions than the fairy palaces of my childish dreams. Curzon’s untiring devotion to self-imposed duty throughout long, arduous, pain-ridden days, his thoroughness, his cheerful assumption of an ever-increasing burden of responsibility, above all, his noble disregard of personal advantage in the pursuit of what he believed to be the good of the country

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which he loved so passionately, in his odd, reserved way, made all my previous ideals of how a man should live, and what he should do, seem utterly inadequate.

Of course, I was also aware of his petulance, caused more often than not by physical pain, of his frequent grave injustices, his many sophistries, as all must be who knew him well ; but the thought of his faults is outweighed in my memory by a sense of deep gratitude to him for his part in raising my whole ideal of public service on to a higher level.

He liked to think of himself in the rôle of an eighteenth-century gentleman of parts, a leisurely traveller, orator and patron of the arts, rather than the overworked modern statesman which he was in reality, and he believed himself to have been born a century too late for the full realization of his natural capacities as a leader ; but it seems to me that he wrought better than he knew. His very failure to attain his full ambitions, his generous willingness to subordinate himself to others, seemingly less able than himself, whenever the public interest demanded it, was to prove an example of selflessness in public life which is of more lasting value than any work which he might or might not have accomplished had he obtained the high office for which he had always longed. Far from failing to achieve leadership, it was his peculiar destiny to set the new standard of untiring personal industry and complete devotion to duty which is now demanded from all national leaders of the twentieth century—and to set it high.

Another man who helped me very much to study the difficult art of thinking clearly was the late Professor Bradley, the author of *Appearance and Reality*, and the leading metaphysician of his time. He used to spend the winter every year at the same hotel in St. Raphael, in the South of France, to which Clayton and my mother used to go, and where I often joined them. He was a natural recluse, and like Goldsmith, detested young people, especially children, having been brought up as one of the eldest of a very large family,

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much pestered by his younger brothers and sisters, and he came to this quiet hotel in search of health and peace. His strikingly handsome, grey-bearded and distinguished-looking figure interested me at once, and I think that my odd type must have amused him too, for he actually introduced himself to me as a fellow-author! and we became great friends. He reminded me of my dear Sir Francis Jeune, and like him, he laboured mightily to remedy the faults and fill the gaps of my preposterous education. I could never manage to attain to an understanding of his lofty metaphysics, although I treasure a signed copy of his tremendous book! But we used to discuss many interesting theories, especially reincarnation, and I managed to learn a little about the more modern philosophies during our walks together, through the lovely pinewoods round St. Raphael and Valescure. I had never attempted to understand any post-Aristotelian views before. There were some things, I really believe, which I might have taught him too, had we met earlier in both our lives, for he was a very human and attractive sage, even at past seventy years old!

To both Curzon and Bradley, my bad spelling was like a red rag to a bull, and it seriously marred their good opinion of me. Lord Curzon's letters were usually the most perfect masterpieces of exquisite and apt phrasing, extremely courteous and filled with reflections upon politics, books and ideas; but once I received this despairing half-sheet from him—“Here are seven howlers which have occurred in your last three letters. . . . I am amazed!” Then followed seven incredibly ill-spelt words!

Professor Bradley, who was good enough to read through my book *Halcyone* in manuscript form, and kindly provided the Greek quotations in it, also insisted upon correcting the spelling on every page in a reproachful and, to complete the joke, entirely illegible hand! It grieves me to think how much labour was wasted upon my worthless self by these two great men in the hopeless task of teaching me to spell!

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A very great character, and certainly the most important feminine political figure of her time was the late Marchioness of Londonderry. She held a really remarkable place in the political world, and her influence was immense, for no one dared to dispute her will. She always recognized brains of any kind immediately and she could be the firmest friend. I had the good fortune never to cross her will, and her kindness to me, and her understanding of my difficulties, was beyond words. I put many of her views and sayings into one of my most successful books, *The Career of Katherine Bush*, and the story of Guinevere, the heroine of my book *The Sequence*, was told me by her one day when we were sitting together in the Squadron Gardens at Cowes in 1912. It was a true story of someone whom she knew.

Wherever she was, she was always the centre of a group of appreciative listeners, for she had the supreme courage of her opinions and she never pandered to the views of anyone for the sake of expediency. Her wit and quickness of repartee were a delight. Above all her virtues in my eyes is the supreme one of having been the mother of the only perfect character whom I have ever known—Birrerie, Lady Ilchester, my very dearest friend in all the world. Lady Londonderry has indeed been worthily succeeded by both her children.

A little set of the most perfectly typical gentlemen of the old school used to come to Cowes every year during the Royal Yacht Squadron's week in August in those pre-War days. I think the most perfect of all was the Commodore, Lord Ormonde. He wore the quaintest, shabbiest clothes, and the soles of his boots were an inch thick, but he was more completely unself-conscious than any man I have ever known. He had not the slightest arrogance nor any of the quite unintentional insolence of many others, equally well-born, who should know better, and every being who came in contact with him loved and respected him. His judgment was faultless and his ideas of honour without blemish. If one could imagine Don Quixote with no dreamy nonsense about

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him, no insanity or false sense of values, but all his chivalry—that was Lord Ormonde. He was quite unsentimental, but full of real sentiment. King Edward and Queen Alexandra went to stay at Kilkenny, the Ormondes' castle in Ireland, and the first night towards the end of dinner the Commodore suddenly got up and went to the door, while the company watched expectantly. Then he returned carrying the hereditary Cup which an early king had given to the Lord Ormonde of the time. It was filled with King Edward's favourite wine, and the dear old Marquess went down on his knee and offered it to his Sovereign, just as his ancestor had done when Henry II made Baron Fitzwalter "Chief Butler" of Ireland, and took the name of "Le Boteler". Thus Butlers the Ormondes have remained for seven hundred years, worthy cupbearers of Kings! It was said that the tears came into King Edward's eyes as he took the goblet from the dear old lord.

In the Squadron Gardens, besides the noble Commodore, were to be found gallant old Sir Allen Young, the Arctic explorer, and Sir John Burgoyne, who in his youth had brought the Empress Eugenie safely over to England in his yacht after the tragedies of 1870, in the teeth of a gale which no French captain could be induced to face. The details of this romantic story were told to me by Count Premoli, the Empress' nephew.

Another distinguished figure was that of Sir Charles Cust, the King's Equerry, beloved of the ladies for his handsome looks, but utterly indifferent to them all. He had a sharp caustic wit which was rather alarming, but the kindest heart possible underneath. The late Lord Dunraven, with his racing yacht, the *Carriad*, was another well-known figure at Cowes, and a great friend of mine since Egypt days. Captain Henry Denison, still handsome and amusing, and Lord Mount Edgcumbe, then Lord Valletort, are, alas! the only two of this little coterie who are left to cheer me with tales of those bygone days.

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I hope that some day these charming, polished, courteous old friends will be allowed to return to earth from the Elysian Fields to which most of them have gone, for the world seems to me a much poorer place since it was bereft of this unique company. The wit, the gaiety, the balanced outlook of such men seems to be sadly lacking in the majority of the uninteresting mediocrities or nervous plutocrats who have taken their places, in so many cases without inheriting their qualities. Perhaps circumstances would scarcely permit such types to exist to-day, for they were the product of leisure, security and inherited wealth and influence, all of which conditions have passed or are passing away ; but in the future, who knows, perhaps the state of the world will be so improved that these favourable conditions may be recreated on a much wider scale. When that happy day comes thousands may succeed in attaining to the wonderfully high standard of polish and courtesy, added to more solid qualities of honour and courage, achieved by this byegone generation of sea-loving Englishmen.

Meanwhile, it is a lasting pleasure to me, and to those women of my generation who are left, to remember the charms of these heroes of our youth, and to think of how we basked in the sunshine of their gallantry and devotion.

The memory of the period between the South African War and the Great War seems to have been idealized by many, who think of it in retrospect as much better than it really was. Certainly it represented an era of comparative stability and contentment when contrasted with the terrible sufferings and upheavals of later days, although vast changes were, in fact, taking place beneath the surface. Looking back on it now, however, it seems to me to have been a period of ebb rather than of flow, of destruction of old ideals and standards without the erection of new, and in which great material progress was made without any corresponding spiritual advance.

Society, in the old meaning of the word, still existed in

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1913, but it was no longer the fairy ring within which danced a circle of families entitled to enjoy its privileges on account of birth and tradition, but never on account of wealth or notoriety, and possessing jealously-guarded standards and rules of conduct. The outward semblance of the old dignity were still preserved, but in reality it was a mere sham. On every side the defences had been broken down by the power of money. Impossible parvenus were to be seen everywhere, introduced by members of the oldest and highest families as a payment for indirect, or ultimately even for direct financial assistance. The real power behind the scenes was nearly always money, and the old standards of honour and of prestige already belonged to the past before the advent of the Great War. Rising death-duties and income-taxes made it impossible for the less well-to-do members of the old society to maintain the standards of pleasure and luxury to which they had become accustomed, much less to keep up with the enormous rise in such standards which was occurring at this time, unless fresh sources of income could be discovered. Some broke with tradition and went into business or the City, some preferred to retain their traditions in dignified but ever-increasing poverty, some sought fortune overseas, but others weakly exchanged their birthright for a mess of potage, and sank to pitiful depths of shame.

The new God of Money was still worshipped only in secret, however, and lip-service was still paid to the old ideals. This was the great hypocrisy of the period before the War, and represented as complete a sham as any of the Victorian conspiracies of silence which were so greatly condemned, and which were fast disappearing. Actual money payments were often accepted in circumstances which would have been considered insulting ten years before—even, I discovered to my horror, between lovely ladies and their lovers, a thing which was unknown in the Victorian period, and which seemed to me the worst of all the unpleasant features of this new century.

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There were, of course, good changes as well as bad. Morality, in the conventional sense was, if anything, at a higher level than in the 'nineties, I believe, for there was less time and opportunity for flirtations with married women, and the society girls, in England at any rate, were still impeccable, with one or two notable exceptions. Outdoor sports, motoring and bridge—eternal, endless bridge—took the place of the pleasantly dangerous philanderings of the Easton days.

Intelligent conversations seemed to become more and more rare, however, and sentiment became confused with sentimentality, and both together fell into disrepute. Religious beliefs became less orthodox, or frequently died away altogether, and a confession of complete agnosticism became fashionable. Those who would once have professed religious beliefs adopted instead a creed which exalted practical good works, and saw little but hypocrisy in public worship. This outlook, which represented a perhaps natural reaction from the pious excesses and repressive cruelties of the Victorians, was put into a nutshell in the little poem "Abou-ben-Adhem" which was taught to every child as the embodiment of a great truth, instead of the tremendous heresy which it really was. It is not compatible with the Christian faith—or with any of the other great religions—to substitute man for God in the first Commandment, and the essence of the change was not merely an increased love of man, but also subconsciously a positive hatred for God, or at least for the somewhat oppressive conception of God which was the legacy of the nineteenth century. To a certain extent I shared this view, although it seems rather childish now. I had always felt a particular dislike for the Angel with the Flaming Sword!

The attitude of the majority of society people towards religion was that of a family of children who secretly detest or despise their parents, and who, while still maintaining an outward show of respect, give as little affection and obe-

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dience to them as possible ; but who are drawn together by their common feeling of rebellion, and are willing to support and shield and comfort each other whenever punishments are threatened or incurred. The truly wonderful outpouring of funds in support of charitable objects such as hospitals, and the real improvement in such matters as the treatment of lunacy or hereditary deformities, besides the almost mawkishly sentimental attitude adopted towards unmarried mothers, was due in great part to this schoolboy spirit of willing help for a fellow sufferer from tutorial injustice.

The tangible results were, however, magnificent, and much generosity, no doubt, flowed from nobler motives than this, although the "Lady Bountiful" atmosphere still prevailed in most matters of charity. We would give out of our abundance towards schemes for the alleviation of the suffering for which we were, according to modern ideas, indirectly responsible, but we would do nothing to prevent it, and we believed that due gratitude should be shown for all favours bestowed. The idea that poor people should receive any benefits by right, or that it behoved us to devise means of preventing the existence of such poverty, had not yet begun to dawn. It was imagined that the poor could only become richer if the rich became poorer and this we were quite unprepared to concede. Thus the battle between the "haves" and the "have nots" raged merrily in those long-ago days before the terrible over-riding claims of war re-united the whole nation, and the soul of the Empire was brought back out of the abyss by the voluntary sacrifice of a million young lives.

Before the South African war there was little opportunity for people in society to make money, and no particular reason why they should lose it, if reasonable caution was exercised. Fortunes were inherited, not made, and although the great rise in land and mineral values which followed the industrial expansion of Victorian times largely increased these fortunes in many cases, it was rare for the owner to be more than

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superficially aware of the reason for his larger income, the actual management of the estates being left, usually, in the hands of agents and lawyers. Thus money-making instincts were seldom aroused, and the operation of the rules of social etiquette tended to discourage them if ever they did appear. This protected, feudal atmosphere was favourable for the erection of that most peculiar, delicate and elaborate structure, illogical in every detail of its design but undoubtedly fine, known in the old days as a gentleman's honour. The years which preceded the War saw this queer but lovely old edifice, the foundation-stones of which were, I believe, laid by King Arthur, slowly destroyed, and the sight was a sorry one.

No doubt it had to be ; the Old Order Changeth and giveth place to New, and the fresh unfamiliar outlines of the twentieth-century ideals are now beginning to show forth, like its own modern buildings, clean and white and strong, through the ugly maze of decayed beliefs which still, like scaffolding, conceal their existence from many eyes. I am glad that I have lived to see this renaissance of the old ideals in a new form. I know that all is well, and that the coming age will bring finer and better gifts in its train than anything of which we of the older generation can dream ; but it is impossible for me to forget the joys and beauties of the age which is gone, or to cease mourning for those dear friends who so perfectly upheld its best traditions.

CHAPTER XX

*Paris and London, 1913–1915*

**I**N the autumn of 1913 I took a house in Paris, as I wanted my daughter Juliet to attend classes there, and I hoped to introduce Margot to some of the gaieties of the Paris world that I had found so delightful at her age.

Although we lived an interesting and rather intellectual life among my old friends, I found everything changed. There seemed to be a wildness over the whole city, and the serene yet witty note, the cultivation and balance that I remembered, were lacking. The change was not merely in my point of view, for I found those of my friends who were still in Paris quite as charming as ever. It was the new society which had arisen which seemed to me to be so completely altered. There was a rushing and a chasing after the *bizarre* in everything, vices and eccentricities were tolerated, reserve was a thing of the past, and even the echo of the *ancien régime* was fading.

The change was so remarkable that my old worship for everything French became a good deal dulled.

By June 1914 the feverish atmosphere of Paris society was quite oppressive, although there was as yet no thought of war. Even in the Faubourg a sinister spirit was abroad, and the ceaseless gaiety and dancing had a *macabre* undertone.

The feeling of oppression grew stronger as July came, and was noticed by many people. Philosophers speculated about it and the older generation shook their heads, but no one pulled up, or took warning.

I decided to return to England and fortunately made

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arrangements to do so well ahead, so that when the final rush came we were able to travel in comfort, and did not share the unpleasant experiences of many English people suddenly forced to leave Paris by the outbreak of war.

It seems strange, on looking back, to remember how oddly ignorant we all were of the possibilities of the political situation. The sense of coming calamity was in the air, but it was quite undefined, and no one appeared to associate it with any possibility of war.

On the 14th of July I took my children to Versailles to see the special exhibition of fireworks to be let off in honour of the day. We had good seats, in the front of a huge crowd assembled in a semi-circle round the *Bassin de Neptune* and watched a really lavish display of beautiful rockets and elaborate set-pieces, while companies of *chasseurs* stationed at various intervals in the woods took up and repeated the lovely calls of the *cor de chasse*. The holiday spirit reigned supreme, and any suggestion that within a month France would be invaded and many of the soldiers so happily strolling about amongst the crowd be dead upon the field of battle, would have seemed incredible.

As late as July 23rd, we went to spend a weekend at a country château not far from Paris. The party was large and there were several distinguished people there, both English and French, whom one would have thought would be aware of the critical diplomatic situation. Yet I remember well the hurt surprise of our hostess at the sudden departure for Paris of the Austrian Ambassador, who was one of the guests. Even with this event to start our speculations, however, none of us believed that anything serious was occurring, and the possibility of war with Germany seemed entirely remote.

Some appreciation of the danger was forced upon us when our solid English chauffeur returned from an errand to my bank, having failed to obtain any small money with which to travel to England next day. He brought instead the case of jewels I had deposited and a number of mille franc notes,

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of little use for tipping porters and settling small bills, but which the manager, he said, had pressed him to bring me while yet there was time. "But why all this, what is it all about?" I remember asking him. "They seem to think there's going to be a war, Ma'am," he replied.

A war? With whom? How ridiculous, we thought, and hurriedly searched in *The Times*, which we had neglected for the last few days owing to the fuss of packing, for reassuring news. But the news was not reassuring.

Before leaving I went to the workroom to say *au revoir* to our old sewing-woman, and asked her what she would do if there was war.

"Eh b'in, Madame, on fera comme en soixante-dix," she said. "Moi j'ai mangé de la soupe au rats, et nous avons eu chez nous deux Allemands pendant six mois—de sales gens, mais il ne nous ont fait aucun vrai mal, seulement des ordures."

I remember thinking that at least such filthy behaviour as she described was a thing of the past, and that even Germans had become civilized by this year of Grace nineteen hundred and fourteen. What a lot we had yet to learn in those old days before the War!

The extraordinary blindness to the real situation which existed, so far as I know, in all society circles in Paris, was apparently not peculiar to France. On arrival in England, on July 31st, finally awakened to realities by the sight of soldiers guarding all the railway bridges as we travelled north, I went with my elder daughter to visit friends at Cowes, and found the place in commotion over the prospect that the Regatta might be put off! Only the dear old Commodore, Lord Ormonde, who met us when we arrived, seemed to think that things must be serious, because Prince Henry of Prussia and a well-known German Admiral, who always came to Cowes, had suddenly cancelled their usual visit. No one had any real information.

All the world knows what happened; but I doubt whether

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the young people of to-day can imagine the excitement and the speculation that went on during those three days before England declared war. Ready money was unobtainable, and large cheques were offered in the Squadron gardens for much smaller amounts of cash. Extraordinary rumours were spread about but none of them came anywhere near the truth, or outlined even dimly the horrors we were afterwards to know. We were all cheerfully confident, the one fear being that the Liberal Government would dishonour England's pledge, and not come in to defend Belgian neutrality. We thought—and perhaps we were right—that if England would only declare her policy at once the Germans would not dare to go on with their invasion of Belgium and thus war might yet be averted.

The first dim understanding of the calamity which was falling upon the world came to me in the little church near Solent Lodge, where the Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland, who was staying with Lady Ormonde, preached a wonderful sermon on the Sunday of August 2nd. He made us appreciate the seriousness of the situation by outlining our duties if England should come into the war. As I listened to his words, my eyes rested upon the little tablet which had been erected in that church to the memory of my friend "Sir Anthony Thornhirst". He was the type of Englishman who excels himself in all emergencies, and the reminder of him, and of his gay, fearless spirit was an additional inspiration.

All boat services were so disorganized that it became impossible to leave Cowes, and in the end we got back to the mainland in Lord Tredegar's yacht, the *Liberty*. She was so large that she had to go out into the deeper water which already had been defensively mined by the Admiralty. I remember the thrill of amazement with which we read the order posted up in the Squadron Gardens to the effect that yachts going into deep waters did so at their peril. The idea of peril in dear old Southampton Water seemed incredible! We arrived quite safely, but the stations were pandemonium.

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I felt furious at the insolent behaviour of some German waiters returning to their native land, and noticed as a contrast the perfect manners, and the broad grins of delight on the faces of the struggling soldiers laden with kit who were returning from leave to join their regiments. Even these men of the professional Army, to whose perfect training Von Kluck has paid such glowing tribute, can have had no conception of the horrors that were awaiting them.

The story of the first year in England is such an oft-told tale that I shall pass on to 1915, when I returned to Paris for a time. I was longing to be of service in some capacity, and so jumped at an offer from a French propaganda organization to go back to France, in order to write articles about the devastated areas for publication in America. I left my children, who were immersed in hospital work, in the care of my mother in London, and went to stay at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, feeling sure that I would see more of the kaleidoscope of events from there than from anywhere else.

The aspect of Paris struck me as much altered from the hectic days before the outbreak of war. It was sober, and there was little social life. It was fashionable to appear to be economizing. Men-servants had been conscripted of course, and the women-servants in their places looked odd. French society was apparently chastened; many women had long crêpe veils, and most faces wore a serious expression. The Ritz was quiet, and the streets were even darker at night than they had seemed in London. All the same, there was none of the passionate earnestness and appreciation of the gravity of the situation which already existed in England. The fact that war was being waged actually on French soil did not seem to dominate people's minds as I had thought it would. A few members of the *haute noblesse* were fighting, but the majority seemed to have obtained rather safe jobs.

Many of the married women were down at their country places or were living in retirement elsewhere. Some of the older ones worked on Charity Committees, and that splendid

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lady, the Duchesse de Rohan, had turned her magnificent *hôtel* into a hospital, and worked there herself all through the war. Etiquette, however, did not permit any French girl of good family to be a nurse, or to do any of the other forms of war work that the English women were already undertaking.

An old and very worldly lady explained to me that other countries must not judge the French women for this attitude, since it was due to the point of view of the men. No Frenchman, she explained, would wish to see a well-brought-up girl working as a nurse, or in an office, and no girl who did such things could expect to make a good marriage. This remained true to the very end.

There was some delay in getting me the permits to go up to the devastated areas, and meanwhile I used to go daily to take flowers and cigarettes to the English wounded in the Trianon Palace Hôtel at Versailles, then a British hospital. I was terribly shocked both by the awful wounds and by the number of deaths which seemed to occur, yet all the men were so cheerful and gay, it was wonderful.

I used to pick out the regular soldiers from the Territorials by their dirty and bad teeth. Toothbrush drill must have been unknown in the British Army before the War. I heard wonderful tales of heroism and gallantry; one Hussar I remember told me the whole story of the death of Lord Redesdale's son, Clement Mitford, who was shot through the heart when rallying his men after a temporary disaster. A story which haunted me was that of the annihilation of a whole battalion by German gunfire, after they had gallantly taken a position in accordance with orders, but had been left without artillery support owing to the shortage of shells. "Only thirty wounded answered the roll call out of nine hundred strong as took the position," a soldier from a North Country regiment told me. "It seems hard-like that we should have to die because those at home go on strike instead of sending out the shells." The man was dead when

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I came next day. I burned with rage to think that such selfishness as that of the strikers could exist—a terrible result of political agitation.

The deadly depression that thinking people felt in those days was greater I believe than at any other time in the War. The danger was less than it had been a year before and far less than three years later, but we had not yet developed our second wind, and hope was at a low ebb. The locked diary that I kept all through the War is filled with gloom at this period. No progress seemed likely on any front; there was no end in sight, and yet the horror of the casualty lists seemed to be sapping the life-blood of the world.

One little incident cheered me, and seemed to bring a message of hope. I had just arrived at the hospital one day with my arms full of red roses, when a man was wheeled past me on his way to the operating theatre. He looked ghastly, and the Sister shook her head faintly in reply to my look of inquiry. I realized that it was a hopeless case, and felt so moved that I ran impulsively after the group and put my loveliest rose into his nerveless hand, telling him that if he would hold it all the time and not let it go he would get well. His fingers closed on it and he smiled. The surgeon told me afterwards that a miracle had happened, for the man had never let go of the rose even under the anaesthetic, and was making a marvellous and unexpected recovery.

The illness of my husband recalled me to London before I could begin my press-propaganda work seriously that year, and in November 1915 he died. The horror and tragedy of everything seemed overwhelming, and I fell ill myself for some weeks.

As soon as I was better I joined the midnight shift of the canteen in Grosvenor Gardens, where the men coming and going to Victoria Station were served with hot meals. Some were fresh from the trenches and still muddy. I remember especially one lot of poor fellows who had just been saved after being torpedoed. Their faces were grim.

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I was never a good waitress, always stupid and muddling, but I could sweep and clean nicely, and finally became one of the most expert of the washing-up staff! I tasted the full joys of a scullerymaid's lot, endlessly washing up egg'y or greasy knives and forks and plates, under the eye of the hard-faced professional canteen manager from Woolwich, who loved to show her authority by humiliating the voluntary workers. But there was an odd satisfaction about the manual work, and the feeling that at last I was doing something tangible to help the poor soldiers, every one of whom seemed a hero, with perfect manners, never the least rude or familiar.

The worst part of it all was the trudging home in the wet at three o'clock in the morning, when taxis and buses were unobtainable. No one thought it strange to do this, for none of us kept a car, petrol being unobtainable, even by a lovely countess who was a member of my shift, and a great friend of a Cabinet Minister. It is interesting to remember that not one of us ever had any unpleasant adventures during these midnight walks about London. Women doing war work were safe in any place at any hour in those days.

At that time only a certain very small set in society danced and laughed while Rome burned, and gaieties were usually permitted only during the leave-periods of husbands and brothers. Men that one knew were all at the front, and women and girls of all ranks and all ages were engaged on some useful if boring job. In 1915, the majority acted at V.A.D.'s in hospitals, but many other forms of work were undertaken. Daughters of dukes slaved in dangerous munition factories, and flighty society girls took men's places on the farms. A friend of mine, whose only son was killed in the Retreat, devoted herself to wrapping up parcels for prisoners of war and went daily to the depot where this uninteresting task was performed by voluntary workers, until the Armistice was signed. Four and a half years' monotonously wrapping parcels as a labour of love shows patriot-

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ism indeed. The two sisters of Sir Robert Kindersley took over the Pantry Department of the War Hospital where my daughters worked, in 1914, replacing a staff of three menservants, and carried on the work without relief or help right through the War. It seems extraordinary that two slight women unused to such things could endure the heavy physical strain involved, and remain on duty for ten hours a day in an airless basement room for over four years without losing their health ; but Solomon spoke truly when he wrote that "the spirit of a man (or woman) can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear ? "

The spirit of England at this time was such that only those bad types of men and women, which exist in every country, were unwilling to do their "bit" ; the great mass of the people, even including the society women against whom Communists love to rave, had been raised to their highest level by the profound drama of the War.

CHAPTER XXI

*Paris, 1917*

IN April 1917 I returned to Paris, as definite arrangements had now been made for me to write descriptions of the devastated areas for the American Press.

Crossing the Channel in 1917 was quite an adventure, and I thought of my thrills over the trifling danger of the return from Cowes with amusement. Two hospital ships had been torpedoed outside Havre earlier in the evening of the night I was to cross, so with the enemy thus daring, the boat I was on was ordered to delay and dodge. We were a day and a night on the way, all the time clothed in grotesquely inflated life-saving jackets, the top pockets of which were thoughtfully stored with a little bottle of brandy and one golden sovereign! Tweedledum and Tweedledee never looked more ridiculous than we all did, and I was convulsed with laughter when I caught sight of myself in a glass.

The air of suppressed gaiety which I found in Paris surprised me immensely, as it was quite different from the subdued note which I remembered in 1915. Then all was sad and depressed, no one had a new dress, and very few people were to be seen at the Ritz. Now every place seemed as crowded as in peacetime, and there was no sign anywhere of a nation at war. The women were most beautifully and expensively dressed, most of them wearing silver fox furs costing in those days about £100 apiece, and all looking brushed and groomed and scented and ready for any *insolent*.

In the crowd at the Ritz were members of both the *monde* and the *demi-monde*, all painted as much one as another, so

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that no stranger could possibly distinguish between them. Innocent-looking young English officers in uniform were having tea in the foyer with the air of boys out for a holiday ; feeling that in a foreign country no one would know them, they sat openly with the " ladies " whom they had picked up and with whom they would certainly not have cared to be seen in a public place in England.

In the evening the Ritz restaurant was almost empty, and this I learnt was because everyone went to the Café de Paris, where the best of the cocottes congregated, and then on to the Folies Bergères or some other show of the revue type. At this time the revues were not the spectacular affairs which they became later on, but were rather vulgar and tawdry and badly put on, sometimes very amusing, with jokes as near the wind as possible, but more often boring. The real attraction was the promenade beside the Bar, where cocottes of every class plied their trade.

All the best type of courtesan was retained by the Chief Generals and Ministers, and this had brought about a rise in the world for the lower types ; those which now haunted the Folies Bergères were of the class which formerly walked the streets. They were the most appalling-looking creatures, painted, diseased, and half drunk with absinthe or drugs. The chorus on the stage was equally bad ; such hideous looks would have been hissed off in England. It made me wild to see these dreadful creatures described as " English troupes ".

The sight of the whole company of idlers at tea the first day struck me as dreadful, after seeing the hard work of everyone in England, and remembering the touching belief which still prevailed there that everyone who had work in France must be a hero. The men not in uniform were of a terrible type ; there were misshapen neutrals, Frenchmen " unfit to fight ", with an air of used-up decadence, and a few American men of the unattractive fat-boy-of-Peckham sort with thick legs and arms and a cocktail complexion. The

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best Americans had already joined the French Army or Flying Corps.

My old friends chaffed me about the appointment of a Food Controller in England, and seemed to think it incredible that a whole nation could be put on its honour to observe food regulations which could not seriously be enforced. They did not believe me when I assured them that cheating over food coupons was rare in England, and I soon realized how completely any attempt to impose self-denying ordinances would fail in France.

Here is an extract from my diary of this time :

" What has happened to the gallant French nation that I used to adore ? So much of the aristocracy here in Paris seems to be just *fin de race*. They have no true outlook, only some decadent remains of the *dix-neuvième* and the Third Empire, without the wit and dignified point of view of the former, and without the pinchbeck vigour of the latter. They seem to be wilted flowers revived by some chemical for a short time, but their roots no longer exist.

" The War only means something to those who have suffered by it ; it means little in the abstract, and less than nothing to the section which it has not touched. The peasants are carrying on in the fields near the Front because it is their life. The little shop-keepers near the lines are carrying on their businesses with unruffled calm, but the real source of their contentment is not patriotism, but simply greed. They charge exorbitant prices for every bundle of straw and every cup of water which they dispose of to the exhausted troops, filling their pockets out of the extremity of human need. They are cunning enough to get paid heavily even by their own countrymen, while the English private soldiers, I am told, spend £25,000 every day in procuring the elementary comforts of life.

" The young Frenchmen have gone to fight because there is conscription, and they were accustomed to the idea ; there are of course many splendid patriots among them, and much glorious courage has been shown. But as soon as

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wounds or disablement release them to become civilians again, craft and self-seeking are their chief characteristics once more, and their ideals are bounded by *bonhomie* and *bon mots* and the family exchequer as before.

"The women have a sex-urge, but they are vicious with over-civilization. They want men, they do not want children. Nature speaks, but sophistication diverts Nature. Poor France !

"Among the lay population, to those who have lost no loved ones and have suffered no decrease of wealth, the War is simply a *bore*—nothing further—'Voyons !—the thing has gone on too long—it is an *ennui*.'

"What has become of the proud old French race ? The French of to-day are an astonishing people. Ungrateful, emotional, dramatic, crafty and self-seeking ; polite only for appearance' sake, uncouth underneath ; witty, gay, brave, and untrue ; yet so fascinating and so brilliant that they will always be loved, not for their qualities but in spite of them."

This time the arrangements and permits for me to visit the devastated areas had all been completed before I left England, and I had not long to wait before starting on my first trip to the battlefields.

I was told that I was to make my will before I left, as the visits might be dangerous, and so indeed the first one proved, although not on account of German shell-fire, but owing to the careless driving of the American Red Cross officer who was to take me up to the battlefields ! He wanted me to sit next to him, but I was possessed by a feeling that I would rather sit behind, a real presentiment as it afterwards turned out. The sensation was so strong that I resisted all his persuasions and sat resolutely in the back of the car in lonely splendour, which I am sorry to say offended him very much. As we came to a bridge, after driving for about an hour, he failed to notice that the tramlines ran too near the kerb for the car to pass, and as the tram thundered towards us it smashed into the side of the car just where I would have been sitting if I had been in front. He got out, trembling, poor

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man, and I think he wondered whether I possessed clairvoyant powers, for he eyed me with a new respect. I felt convinced after this that I bore a charmed life, and never worried at all about the bomb which nearly hit the car I was in on my second visit.

A few days later I set forth once more, accompanied by a French officer, and this time with an excellent chauffeur.

I dined with the French G.H.Q. at Compiègne on the first night of my tour, and the good impression I got of these fine serious men went far to blot out the bad one produced by the society in Paris. One should never judge a nation by the scum which appears upon the top.

The French officers told me that no other woman had been so near to the Front. I gathered that it was because of my knowledge of America and the belief that my writings would carry weight there, that I was allowed to see so much. The co-operation of the United States of America was recognized to be vital to the successful issue of the War, and propaganda in America was an important part of French policy. Hence my permits to visit the most interesting zones, and the courtesy with which I was treated.

Here is part of the description in my diary of this, my first visit to the real fighting lines :

" May 15th, 1917.

" To-day we passed through Noyon, Lassigny, Suzoy, Crapeau-Mesnil, Roye, Avricourt, Chauny and other places in the region which the Germans evacuated after the terrible fighting in March, and which is now behind the French lines. All that fair part of France, in times of peace the most rich and smiling vista of cultivated fields, prosperous villages and orchards, is now one colossal scene of devastation.

" Men—alas—have had to grow so familiar with the sight of the horrors of war that they can perhaps no longer feel about them in the way that a woman can who sees the terrible sights for the first time.

" We started from Compiègne very early in the morning

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of a perfectly divine spring day. The fresh green of the trees, and here and there the song of a bird, made it seem impossible that death and desolation could be near to us. Coming through Senlis on the previous afternoon, a demolished street had given the first sinister impression, but the ruin here was effected in 1914 when the Germans were approaching Paris, and it seemed that time must have softened the crude wounds, for they did not appear so gruesome as the damage of to-day.

"The only indication of unusual things which one experienced for a kilometre or two after quitting Compiègne was the sight of the notices for the direction of convoys, and the huge stacks of barbed wire and of poles for fixing it. In the Forêt de l'Aigle the lilies of the valley were in full bloom, and all this beauty made the background for immense grey lorries as they glided along the broad road ; and just inside the wood itself was a track of rails for the transport of ammunition and guns. Soon we passed small groups of burnt and blackened houses in a tiny hamlet, but the trees seemed to cover the nakedness as with a friendly green cloak, and the first sense of real grimness came only when Bailly was reached —or what was once Bailly, for the large village is merely a series of heaps of stones in two long rows, among which the foundations of the houses are just perceptible, that is all.

"One comes upon it suddenly from a turn in the road, and one is told that here a fierce battle raged for days and days. Alas ! poor Bailly, smashed and annihilated by both friend and foe ! I saw some much more terrible things during the day, but the first view of Bailly gave me the strongest emotion, because in spite of descriptions and photographs I had not understood the actual hideousness and cruelty of war until that moment, and was overwhelmed by the pitiful sight of all those neat little houses crushed to powder, and by the knowledge that on this spot numbers of human beings had recently sacrificed their lives.

"Soon we came upon some trenches evacuated nearly two months before. I had seen photographs of trenches, of course, but no picture gives the impression of the real thing, for the colour—and the stench—are lacking. There

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is an atmosphere of awe surrounding the real trenches in which men have fought and died which no imitation of them, however perfect, can reproduce. The trenches I visited were deep ditches with mud walls staked back, sometimes, with boards, and protected by a rampart consisting of piles of sandbags filled with earth. Although the sun had blazed for three days they were still a foot deep in filthy green stagnant water, here and there a small platform emerging. I could imagine the sheer horror of going down into this terrible place, with its foul smell and its cramped space, and of having to crouch there for hours and days, the only respite a snatched sleep inside an equally filthy dug-out or blockhouse. The flies and stuffiness in summer—the cold in winter—and with it all the ever-present shadow of death.

"From the higher level of the road on which we were standing it appeared as though a maze stretched out on either side, an impossible labyrinth of tortuous passages, hard enough to find the way about by daylight; impossible, one would have thought, at night.

"As I returned to the car I passed once more the heaps of stones that marked the site of the shattered village and I noticed the pathetic evidences of family life protruding from the ruins—a poor old bedstead of iron, a sodden mattress, and in one place the head of a child's toy horse. A curious feeling of stupefaction came over me, and I looked up into the blue sky for relief. Then suddenly the air was rent with the distant thunder of battle beginning again towards the south. The sinister volume of sound announcing its message of death and suffering awakened some tremendous emotion in me, hitherto unknown. It is a solemn moment when one first hears the sound of guns—guns not firing volleys in honour of some public rejoicing, not exploding empty shells at reviews, but guns deliberately aimed at human beings with the intention to kill.

"The country for miles round and beyond Baily was one vast desolation rendered the more piteous to look at by the contrast of the tender spring green of any bush or sapling which had chanced to escape the blast of shells. And not merely of shells. One of the things which enraged me the

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most was the wanton destruction of all the young fruit trees by the Germans before their retreat. For miles and miles the smiling innocent trees, their early bloom still on them, lay prone, hacked down apparently out of pure malice and brutality."

In the Forest of Ourscamp there was a Boche Cemetery. Written in French in large letters, on a board in front of it, were the words :

"Ici repose une bande des Vandals."

I believe that Englishmen would not thus have mocked at death, but remembering the incident of the fruit trees, I wondered whether the epithet Vandal was any too strong. Later I was to hear numerous authentic stories of the most appalling atrocities committed by the German troops upon the civil population. It is now the fashion to pretend that the reports of such things published at the time were invented for the purposes of propaganda. I would like to put on record that the tales of rape and torture which were recounted to me on this tour were all fully supported by sworn testimonies of eye-witnesses, and I do not believe that there was much exaggeration.

I had one exciting adventure which I shall always remember although I scarcely realized the danger of it at the time. As we were returning from the Front on the last day we had to pass over a long straight sunken road with a shocking surface, full of holes. We were proceeding along it at a leisurely pace when the sound of an approaching aeroplane made us look up. It was a German Taube, and evidently its object was to circle over the car and to drop a bomb on us all. The chauffeur accelerated madly and we careered over the fearful bumps at the top speed of the powerful car. The Taube pursued us and dropped a bomb which fell behind us, and then circled again in order to sweep down and bomb us again from closer range, when suddenly it seemed to check

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itself and veer away. Only just in time, however, for as we reached the corner of the straight part of the road, we were all but deafened by the sound of a tremendous salvo fired at the plane by a concealed French anti-aircraft battery. It had been so well camouflaged that we had no idea that it was there, until, without warning, Hell seemed to come up from the ground and break loose on the other side of the little hedge and we saw the plane scuttle away as hurriedly as we had fled before, pursued by the bursting shells as we had been by the bombs. It finally disappeared from sight, to our great relief, and the battery was silent and invisible once more.

It is difficult now to remember the extraordinary callousness and indifference to suffering and death, even one's own, which seemed to spread over us all during the War. I find that the entry in my diary on the day of my return from this first tour of the battlefields, which had really shocked me very much, and which had ended with such a narrow escape, was devoted to a description of a new Reboux hat which had arrived in my absence, and which I was enraged to find had got dented on one side!

CHAPTER XXII

*Paris, Autumn, 1917*

I WOULD like to pay tribute to one charming French-woman, the Comtesse de la Bérodière, who helped to make the lives of many English officers on leave from the Front, or working in Paris, a little brighter and happier. Her big comfortable *hôtel* in the Parc Monceau was the centre of all Paris, and she gave ungrudging hospitality to hundreds of Englishmen who would otherwise have had a lonely and uninteresting time during their spells of leave in Paris. They all found welcome and kindness under her roof.

She gave evening parties constantly, where everyone could meet and talk, or even dance. The dancing was *sub rosa*, for it was officially forbidden, but often the chairs used to be pushed back in an unpremeditated way, and the soldiers were able to obtain a little joy and forgetfulness out of the modern dances that were then coming in. The last news of what was happening at the Front was always passed on from one guest to another here.

Paris life was extremely interesting in the summer of 1917. The dangerous loss of morale which had followed the failure of Nivelle's offensive in May had not spread beyond the disaffected section of the French Army, and the majority believed that the entry of America into the War would make up for the withdrawal of Russia. As far as I could tell, there was no anxiety in Paris at this time with regard to the final outcome of events; ultimate victory was taken as a matter of course, and there was no idea that the districts

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so painfully recaptured from the Germans would ever be retaken by them.

I became Vice-President of a society known as the "Secours Franco-Americain" which was formed with the object of enabling refugees to resettle in the recaptured areas.

Our President was Mrs. Prince, of Boston. We had a great many grand French names on our Committee, but those who did the real work were either English or American. It was my first experience of committees, and often it seemed to me more like the Mad Hatter's tea-party than anything else. The French ladies could never keep to the point under consideration. If one of them attempted to contribute to the discussion, and unhappily employed some expression or made some allusion capable of starting another train of thought, the others would immediately interrupt her to follow up the new subject and the thread of the original discussion might be lost four or five times in this way before the first point could be decided. Sentiment came before everything, when decisions not demanding personal contributions had to be made; but when it came to subscriptions, sentiment seemed to pall, and it was all but impossible to get our French members to give anything substantial towards the funds. I remember feeling real surprise and gratification on one occasion, when Mademoiselle Dorziat, the charming French actress to whom several English officers lost their hearts so completely, gave a recitation at a reception in aid of our society. She recited in French a description of the devastated regions which I had written after my first visit there, and when she sat down the audience were so much moved that they actually began to open their little gold bag-purses, and to take out their money to give to the funds. One even gave 100 francs! But this was very unusual. If it had not been for the generosity of the English and Americans in Paris I am sure that none of the War Charities could have carried on for any length of time.

The efforts made by the French ladies to raise money

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were often comic. A big bazaar was organized in aid of our funds, and numerous gifts were received for the various stalls. Amongst them a large consignment of tea was offered by a tea dealer for sale at whatever price we could obtain, on the understanding that a little less than cost price should be paid to him for the amount sold. The society, he hoped, would thus reap a handsome profit. Instead of asking a good price for the tea, the Bazaar Committee decided to sell it at cost price, "to make things seem cheap", and all were delighted at the brisk trade which ensued. The ladies who had come reluctantly prepared to spend a certain amount of money at the bazaar, naturally preferred to purchase a useful thing like tea at a price well below that of the shops, than to buy the useless things on the stalls. Scarcely any of these were sold, but the tea was all disposed of at a profit of four sous a pound. Until the tragedy was explained by the accountant at the end of the day, not one of the Committee was able to see that as a result of this folly all their hard work had brought into the funds only about ten francs, while the money of potential customers had been diverted from the other stalls to the purchase of the unprofitable tea.

In spite of such inefficiency, however, the work of our Committee somehow produced some practical results, and many thousands of pounds were raised and spent in providing solid material benefits for the inhabitants of the devastated areas.

Our object was to enable as many land workers as possible to return to their farms, and to recommence growing food-stuffs, wherever the soil was not so scarred by shells as to be incapable of cultivation. The menace of food shortage was a serious one at this time, and I think the intentions of our Committee were really laudable. We could not foresee that all our hard work would be entirely destroyed by the German advance in the following spring, and that the only harvest which would ripen on those stricken fields was the terrible harvest of Death.

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We chose the Noyon district as the first area to be reconstructed, and set to work with great energy to collect funds and to obtain materials to build and equip huts in which the farm labourers and their families could live, until their homes could be rebuilt after the War. As Vice-President in charge of much of the actual work on the spot I went often to this part of the Line and was given a permanent pass allowing me to enter this section at all times. I felt quite important, and believed the work to be of great value to the Allied cause!

By now, there were a large number of my friends, English, French, and American, in Paris, and I was, I am almost ashamed to admit, extremely happy, in spite of the terrible casualty lists which still appeared every two or three days. Perhaps this was because the names of those whom I had known of military age had already adorned them, and my sense of personal anxiety was no longer strong. The burden of the casualties fell most heavily upon the County families in 1914 and 1915, for their sons were usually in the Regular Army or Reserve, and thus bore the brunt of the fighting until the new armies could be trained. By 1917 it was the turn of "Kitchener's Army" and the "Temporary" Officers to carry on the War, and the strain of ceaseless anxiety fell on other shoulders.

I think this feeling of satisfaction which I had was shared by all those who had an opportunity to do war-work, and was not merely due to personal vanity on my part. When I look back at the busy self-importance of some of the people I knew, I refuse to believe that I was ever worse than they! Even the genuinely humble or even naturally sad characters, such as Lady Dudley, who did such magnificent work at her hospital at Boulogne, seemed to find satisfaction and peace through their work.

The opportunity to be of use came to an end with the War in many cases, and this gave rise to a great deal of depression and even of neurasthenia amongst the very people who had done the finest service, and who had remained

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cheerful and undismayed by the most terrible dangers and difficulties while there was work for them to do. I have often thought what a pity it is that this spirit of happy and enthusiastic service is so seldom aroused except in a great national emergency such as the War or the General Strike. No doubt this is what the Fascist organizations strive to attain and their ability to do so in some measure amongst uncritical people underlies their strength. Fascism must always fail in England because only confidence in the virtue of a cause, and not obedience to the whim of a Dictator, can call forth this latent spirit of achievement which exists in the great majority of Englishmen, unseen for the most part, but manifesting itself in the immense amount of useful voluntary work which is quietly carried out. Such philanthropic efforts are the peace-time counterparts of War activities and seem to bring the same sense of happy fulfilment to those who undertake them.

But I am digressing from Paris in 1917.

Colonel Le Roy Lewis was the Military Attaché at our Embassy, and he and Colonel Spears (now Brig.-General Spears, M.P.), his assistant, were amongst those who often dined at my little corner table opposite the windows in the Restaurant at the Ritz. Many interesting things were discussed at this table, for no one could overhear what was said there. One of the people who deserved high decorations from the Allies was Olivier, the head waiter. I used to tell him that he should be the Minister for Foreign Affairs, for I believe there was nothing that he did not know about events, personalities and *liaisons*. His tact and subtle understanding of situations were as masterly as his kindly cynicism was profound. I used to say that he was the re-incarnation of Fouché, and certainly no one could have had a greater insight into character.

He loved Le Roy Lewis, but "Monsieur le Colonel" was often an anxiety to him—after a certain lady came to Paris. Only France can produce such a combination of

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discernment and astuteness as Olivier always showed. He would adopt an attitude of overdone respect when he despised people, and undesirable newcomers were always flattered into taking an obscure table. When the Americans began to swarm in, he was temporarily upset. "*Des braves gens*," he used to say, "but they do not understand to eat." When Lady Congreve came to Paris from her hospital which was right up at the Front, her warm Irish heart would not allow her to snub the undesirables who came and gushed at her, but Olivier would pounce at once, and whisper as he shepherded them away, "*Milady cannot dine with ces dames.*"

One of our Royalties told me an exquisite story of Olivier's sympathy with the spirit of the times. The Prince happened quite innocently to remark an English lady sitting near, and to ask Olivier who she was. She was the wife of an English officer, visiting him in Paris during his five days' leave from the Front, and she looked odd amongst the chic Parisiennes with her lovely face and frumpy clothes. It was the awful hat which had caught the Prince's eye, but Olivier's French point of view naturally imagined it to be the face. "She is just the wife of a little officer, *Monseigneur, tout-à-fait respectable*"—then fearing he might have caused disappointment he added reassuringly, "*Mais rien n'est impossible, Mon Prince.*"

There were many pathetic partings between these sweet English wives and their attractive husbands when the five days' leave was up; and some good-byes not, perhaps, so tragic but often impassioned, between other good-looking Englishmen and the equally attractive French ladies who had beguiled their lonely days.

The cloak of acquired civilization was wearing thin under the strain and stress of war, and the familiarity with blood and death; the primitive forces of nature emerged in these war-weary heroes, and the restraints of convention were thrown to the winds. It was impossible to live at the Ritz in these terrible years and to watch the barely-concealed emotions

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of so many men and women without growing to appreciate far more deeply than before the heights and depths of human courage, human weakness, human capacity for achievement and endurance, and also, alas, for degradation and vice.

Early in December of 1917 Lord Milner came to Paris. I had not seen him for some years, and was delighted to renew our old friendship. He had grown older to look at, and seemed worn and tired. He was still, as always, aloof and reserved, but this apparent stiffness merely threw into relief the great charm of his personality in those rare moments when he was able to unbend.

Everyone "in the know" was delighted at his appointment to the Supreme War Council, and predicted that something sensible would now be done.

I am proud to remember that during the whole time that he was engaged in the momentous work of conducting the Ministry of War during the greatest climax in British history, and during the scarcely less strenuous days of the Peace Conference which followed, he honoured me with his confidence, and treated me as a reasonable and patriotic being, worthy of trust in matters of state.

I put in here a letter from him written to me in the darkest period of the German advance in 1918, and which seems to me to epitomize not merely his own great courage and humility, but the noble spirit of the whole British race :

"Many thanks for your inquiries about my health.—I keep—*umberufen*—wonderfully well, despite my age, and work, and anxieties which are, it is no exaggeration to say, appalling! And I am cheerful too in a sense—not sanguine, or for the matter of that pessimistic—for I feel we are all pygmies in the face of events so vast and *defying all human prevision*, just corks bobbing on the top of great rollers in an Atlantic storm.

"Anything may happen. One lives in the presence of the most staggering possibilities of disaster. But so too does the enemy.

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"If I am cheerful, it is because I am 'all in' without any reservation whatsoever, or regrets for the past or thought of the future. '*On fait ce qu'on peut*' and the event is on the knees of the Gods."

The Christmas of 1917 came, and with it the appearance of the first arrivals of the American Army in Paris. General Allaire was their Provost Marshal, a very charming man. A growing number of the best Americans had been coming over for months as volunteers, but now a few of the official contingents had arrived.

The extraordinary narrowness and ingratitude of the French showed itself in a total lack of welcome to these friendly strangers who had come three thousand miles across the sea to aid their country. They were offered no private hospitality, and no effort whatever was made by the French society women to mitigate the loneliness of their allies and guests, this first Christmas on foreign soil. Many of them were destined never to return to their native land, for the casualties amongst these first American troops were terribly heavy.

The French ladies would only "know" those who had come over with introductions to them. Social ethics had had such an overwhelming influence upon French women for such countless years that they apparently found it impossible to change their ideas quickly to meet new situations. I have always found the French very slow to change anything fundamental. However their outward manners adapt themselves to circumstances their ideas remain the same.

Mabel Malet, Lord St. Leven's sister, who had married a Frenchman, and the Comtesse de Luart, whose mother had been an American, and myself felt that something must be done to undo the harm of this cold welcome, and to express the supposed gratitude of Frenchwomen to their American Allies. We persuaded the Comtesse de Sainte Aldegonde

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to lend us her splendid house at the end of the Avenue du Bois, and we three arranged to send in all the refreshments for a big New Year party. We issued the invitations in the name of some important French ladies through General Allaire, and invited every American officer in Paris to drink in the New Year. We hoped that enough French people would come too to make the idea that it was a *French* welcome seem plausible.

The official hostesses stood at the head of the great staircase and received their guests graciously, but that was all. They talked only to the Generals and Colonels to whom they were personally introduced by General Allaire, and with the exception of the Comtesse de Sainte Aldegonde and her lovely daughter, and the Marquise de Mun, who were charming, the whole entertainment of these masses of forlorn-looking khaki-clad young Americans was left to us. It was rather difficult for six women to talk individually to two hundred men, and to make a success of a party at which the rest of the ladies stood about in groups speaking only to a few, and turning their backs on the rest of their guests.

The blank air over everything at last made us desperate. As midnight approached and some of the poor shy fellows were seen slinking away, Madame Malet and I took the bull by the horns and did an unheard of thing in polite French society. We climbed up on to the biggest refreshment table and called out to everyone to come and sing "Dixie"! The band struck up the tune, punch was served, and at last the ice was broken, and we were able to shout in the New Year with some show of hilarity.

General Allaire, with infinite understanding and taste, wrote to thank the kind and charming French hostesses for their beautiful party and warm welcome to his countrymen.

The French ladies said afterwards that it was because they spoke English so badly that conversation with the American

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officers was impossible. The English private soldiers might have given them a lesson in how to get on with those whose language you do not understand.

The gift of tongues, like many other things it seems, springs from a kind and understanding heart.

## CHAPTER XXIII

*Reflections on 1917*

**A**T the end of 1917 I had an experience which made me realize that true courage consists in controlling the expression of fear once it is aroused, rather than in feeling none, and which filled me with profound admiration for the thousands of men who had daily to overcome, not merely the fears arising from real danger, but also the nightmare alarms due to individual and private terrors. Most of us are afraid of something, and outstandingly courageous people have admitted to peculiar fears. Lord Roberts is said to have been terrified of cats, and one of the bravest men in the War, General Carton de Wiart, V.C., D.S.O., whose daring was proverbial and resulted in his being wounded, I believe, thirteen separate times, assured me that he was so nervous in the dark that he always went to sleep with a night-light burning! However that may be, I know that my especial nightmare is that of being shut in a small space, and on this occasion I experienced it to the full.

I was with the French Third Army, not alone this time, but with a number of other Press representatives. The shells seemed to be coming rather too near for safety, and the General who was showing us round insisted that we should take shelter in a dug-out. The bombardment had not frightened me at all, but the idea of having to go down into this cramped stuffy place 40 feet below ground made my knees begin to tremble so much that I could hardly manage to clamber down the ladder into the dark hole beneath, even with the gallant aid of a kind Swiss reporter. There was not much

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room for us all, and the sensation that we were shut in there, buried alive as it seemed, caused me the most horrible fear. My tongue was dry and my forehead damp, and only the memory of Grandmamma's teachings kept me from screaming aloud. Perhaps the controlling force was really vanity ! I should have died of shame if I had disgraced myself by fainting or showing alarm before all those men ; and no doubt this feeling of pride had helped many other frightened people to act bravely.

La Rochefoucauld says that, "Perfect valour is to do without witness that which one would be capable of doing before all the world." Alas ! that this should be the valour which receives no earthly reward.

I had other exciting adventures behind the lines, but none made me feel in the least afraid, I am thankful to say. Once, near Soissons, the shells came screaming over our heads with such an awe-inspiring sound that the French officer who was with me hastily dragged me into a gravel-pit beside the road. There we ate our sandwiches and drank a bottle of white wine—very good it was too, I remember—under a perfect arch of screaming shells ; but as the nice officer explained reassuringly, they seldom fall short, and if they do—well—"C'est la guerre !" These French soldiers up at the Front were the dearest fellows, so gay and courageous. They had the spirit of the real France which I knew in my youth, totally unlike the rotten set in Paris.

The most moving experience I had in the War was when I was obliged to stay the night in a ruined house near St. Quentin. The elderly French officer who was conducting me lost his way, and became alarmed lest we should stray into a really dangerous area. It grew very late and dark, and at last he declared that we must positively travel no further, but must spend the night in the ruins of a shelled village through which we were passing. Part of the church, and some of the walls of the houses were still standing, but the

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fronts had been blown off all of them, and most of the roofs had fallen in.

We found one house which had a staircase left, and two rooms one above the other like a doll's house, with open fronts, but the ceilings intact and some remains of furniture left. There was even a bedstead in the upstairs room, which the kind old officer insisted I should occupy, explaining that starving dogs sometimes were in hiding in such ruins and could be disagreeable at night. He and the chauffeur, a wounded *poilu*, occupied the two broken chairs in the lower room, and must have been very cold there, I fear, as they gallantly insisted that I should have the car rug to wrap myself in.

There was no wall to impede the view, and I lay there all night on the hard laths of the skeleton bed in the shattered room, watching the shelling of St. Quentin, less than ten kilometres away. The noise of the heavy bombardment was too loud to permit of sleep, and I shall never forget the sight. The livid sky above reflected the scarlet flames that leapt upwards as the fire swept through the town. The bursting shells hurled great masses of earth and masonry into the air, while the gaunt, magnificent old cathedral stood out black against the glow, as if defying the forces of evil.

It was very solemn and terrible, and the curious quiet of the deserted village seemed almost uncanny, in contrast to the fearful sound of the guns such a short distance away.

I felt deeply awed, but not in the least afraid.

There are some whose feelings of terror are aroused chiefly by anything eerie or supernatural. I have had many strange experiences of this kind, and have felt no fear at all, although I recognize that real terrible danger surrounds those who deliberately seek to dabble in hidden things, and that devilish power is an absolute reality.

The sudden appreciation of impending calamity produces a peculiar cold, sick sensation not exactly the same as the suffocating terror of actual momentary fear, but almost as

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oppressive. To carry on for long under the stress of terrible anxiety is a most wearing thing. It is small wonder that the great figures of the War have nearly all passed away, although many of them were still young in years when they died.

The burden of anxiety which the leaders carried was often heavier than we guessed at the time. Although living in Paris during the terrible stress of May and June 1917, after the failure of Nivelle's offensive on the Chemin des Dames had brought the French soldiers to the point of mutiny, I saw no signs whatever of general alarm, and the awful knowledge of this failure and dread of its ultimate results which must have been felt by those responsible for the conduct of the War was, so far as I know, unshared by those outside the Cabinet and General Staff.

As the autumn of 1917 wore on, however, I could not help noticing the growing apprehension felt by those of my friends who were "in the know", and I learnt the cause of some of their fears. The growing menace of the unrestricted submarine warfare with its possibility of real starvation and the transfer to the Western Front of masses of German Divisions hitherto retained on the Eastern Front by the Russian Army, were the grim facts which had to be faced. There was expectation amounting to certainty that an overwhelming attack would shortly be attempted by the Germans on the Western Front, in the hope of snatching victory from the Allies before the American Army could be got ready to reinforce the exhausted French and English troops.

The fact that food was short was of course common knowledge, and was the subject of speculation amongst my French friends. There were reports that bread tickets would come in France, they told me, and that the English were really economizing—yes, just imagine, doing without luxuries, and eating hardly any meat! *Les braves gens!* No French households went short of anything yet, although there was beginning to be a feeling that economy should be the dominant note in public. It was no longer good taste to wear

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expensive furs. Sables and chinchillas and foxes were put away, and replaced by sheered rabbit, mounted, however, on the most expensive materials, and costing almost as much. But that did not matter! It was technically branded as cheap, and that was the point.

My diary at this time is filled with caustic comments upon the superficiality—and worse—of Paris life. Perhaps I was unduly severe, seeing it from the point of view of one who was privileged to know something of the real seriousness of the situation, and whose eyes had been opened to the full horrors of war by frequent visits to the devastated regions. I should have remembered that the incredible callousness of the section of French society of which I saw so much, was due largely to ignorance of the real situation, and that the spread of immorality was, perhaps, a natural result of the strain and stress of the time. There was a madness in the air which few could resist. It showed itself in all sorts of eccentricities. Howard Sturgess, a very nice, rich young American, kept a tame lion cub, I remember, which laid open his nose one day. Another kept a monkey, and many of those in Paris at that period began to associate with persons whom they would never have tolerated in normal times.

It is only fair, also, to remember that while the fashionable set was growing more and more wild, there were numbers of magnificent people who continued steadfastly to work for France. The old Duchesse de Rohan was one of these. She gave her house as a hospital, her money to carry it on, and her services to the wounded men through all the terrible years, as noble and self-sacrificing as any of the English women. She loathed the way so many of the others idled and loafed. Her son was killed at Verdun, but she did not grudge his loss for France. Dear splendid lady!

In order to show the utter want of balance which did exist, however, I here insert an unexpurgated extract from my diary written in January 1918:

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"I have seen some frightful pictures to-day done by 'modern' French artists. It would seem that real taste has disappeared in France, and all creative art is dead. When originality is attempted, the result is as *dénaturé* as the thoughts and lives of the people. Vice is rampant in Paris, Lesbians dine together openly, in groups of six sometimes, at Laru's. They are everywhere, and are freely spoken about without shame. Men the same. Nothing is sacred, nothing is hidden, not even vice and avarice. The note is to be "natural" and "Nature" now appears to be a distorted thing. Oh! what is the matter with humanity?

"Last night I dined with Princess ——, daughter of a very old noble family. The party consisted of two Frenchmen, an American officer and a French Comtesse besides my hostess and myself. The two Frenchmen were of the type who look as if they have begun having love affairs in the nursery and so have become *épuisé* in their teens.

"One of them never opened his mouth except to squeak cynical and mordant monosyllables, and both seemed to have no interests other than worn-out sex desires of a vicious type. One had lost a leg early in the War, and was now in the Foreign Office, but the War meant nothing to either of them but a shocking weariness.

"The American officer, a little uncouth, but real and clean and human, sat beside me, for which I was thankful. He asked me about my work for the devastated regions, and the two Frenchwomen listened for a little as I described what our Society was trying to accomplish there.

"The Comtesse laughed as she carefully outlined her crimson lips, and said :

" 'I suppose it feels quite wonderful to work—I must try it—a new emotion!'

"We went on, all crammed into her motor (only the friends of Ministers or Generals can obtain petrol for their cars nowadays!) to the *Lune Rousse*, and heard some very witty songs, and then on to Madame ——'s, where we sat and watched the dancing. The young Duchess ——, charming bacchante that she is, dances with perfect poetry of voluptuous motion, clasped close in the arms of an Argentine tango

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expert, their lips not two inches apart, eyes plunged in his eyes, her unquiet body undulating against his, every movement of both in unison. This Argentine has been her partner—not her lover—for several months, though no one would believe it to see them dance. The real lover is an Italian, with whom she has been going about since she parted from a certain noble Englishman, and rumour has it that she has been careless over this affair and is to have an operation. The old husband has been told it is appendicitis. She is a study ; just an entity, not wicked, merely animal and faun-like, not a pixie. One can picture her with her head crowned by vine leaves and her body naked but for a leopard skin, leaping over the crags of Parnassus on her way to a Bacchanalian orgie. Imagine the mentality which could dance such dances night after night with a professional partner, when she is already aware of the existence of the lover's child ! She does not know that there is a war, and cares not a whit for the old and honoured name which she holds, although she is highly born herself also.

"There are many others who, like her, eat and drink and dance, and live without the least sense of responsibility.

"One young widow was there to-night, her husband killed only four weeks ago, so bored, she said, with the funeral ceremonies and her mother-in-law's crocodile tears, that she had to come out and dance for a little ! She was wrapped in a yard or so of black chiffon, and apparently nothing else.

"If God sent the War as a lesson to the world it is not half learned yet I fear ! Certainly not in Paris."

CHAPTER XXIV

*Spring, 1918*

THE inhabitants of Paris were destined to learn a good deal more about the horrors of war during the terrible months that followed.

I lived in Paris throughout the period of the German attacks, and I will try to reproduce from my diary a picture of this exciting time.

First came the air raids. These were frequent after the end of January, and did a good deal of damage. In the one of January 31st, forty-five people were killed and two hundred and seven injured, and some later raids were equally severe. In spite of this, the spirit of the Parisians was such that the "Gothas", as the aeroplanes were called, were treated as a joke, and except for the inconvenience of the darkened streets life seemed to go on much as usual.

At first, the authorities took the raids rather seriously, and orders and regulations were made about taking shelter, etc. Visitors at the Ritz were ordered to leave their rooms, if they were on upper floors, and to take refuge in the hall on the Vendôme side without delay when the signals were given. This meant that we had to jump out of bed and descend into the hall clothed in whatever came to hand, and the result was very funny indeed, as most of the attacks took place in the small hours of the morning. After a while these rules were relaxed, as the planes came nearly every night. I was glad not to be obliged to go down, as it was altogether too tiresome to have to keep leaving one's bed.

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Early in February came the next serious raid, and Henry Channon, now a Member of Parliament, very kindly came to fetch me. It was braving danger to himself as he had to cross the long passage from the Vendôme side to the Cambon side where I lived. Following the instructions which we had been given, I hurried down with him, clad in my best pink negligée, mule slippers, and a lace cap, with a fur coat on top! I found that the hall was filled with old American ladies, very respectably garbed, and clutching their jewel cases; "red tab" officers still in uniform; little fluffy American girls having a glorious time with them; and various men in pyjamas and coats. The whole scene was lit only by a discreet green lamp beside the concierge. Imagine the opportunities! I found a seat by the pillar at the reception desk, and watched the curious scene. Presently Lord Dawson of Penn (Sir Bertram Dawson as he was then) introduced a huge man in an old-fashioned nightshirt, scutum coat, and slouch hat, bare legs (like mine!) and slippers which kept coming off! He had been the Russian Minister at Stockholm under the Imperial regime. We sat there for two hours, seriously discussing high politics in general and those of Russia in particular, to the accompaniment of gunfire and explosions which we pretended not to hear.

A week or so later we met again in the same circumstances, and this time were joined by Colonel Hunter and some other British officers whom I knew, and we had another long conversation in the semi-darkness. There was much interest in the announcement of Sir William Robertson's resignation, and the appointment of Sir Henry Wilson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in his place. No one knew then just how important this change would prove, but all felt it would mark a turning-point in British policy, as indeed it did, by paving the way for the unified command under Foch a few weeks later. The terrible danger in which the Allies stood at that time was well understood by all of us in that little group, and as we sat there steadfastly refusing to feel the

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least alarm when the "zoo-oom" of the attacking aeroplanes was heard overhead, our mental attitude towards the raid was an odd reflection of our real feelings about the War. No doubt remained now as to whether the attack would come; we could hear the explosions as the first bombs fell on the outskirts of the city, and the sudden cutting off of the engine as a Gotha swooped to drop another one nearer to the hotel. The only doubt remaining was as to the whereabouts of the next explosion and what our fate would be after the fall of the impending blow. And so with the future of the War.

A tiresome attack of influenza followed by severe laryngitis sent me to the south for a few days in March, by doctor's orders. I was furious at having to leave my work at this critical moment, but having lost my voice entirely there was no alternative. I stayed first at St. Raphael, near Cannes, and went over for one day to Nice. I was struck by the great quantities of black troops everywhere. How greatly ideas become changed by necessity! At one time I would have shuddered at the thought of using black troops to attack white men, but now I felt only relief to think that France possessed all these reserves.

The gaiety of Nice gave me quite a shock. The town seemed crowded with men and women apparently unaware that France was fighting for her life. There were cocottes in gay dresses, shops full of jewellery and fashions and flowers. Hat shops galore, and every sort of luxury except sweets. Numbers of dreadful-looking men were about, and a few wounded officers, recuperating. I had always thought it a horrible place, but now it seemed almost revolting, and I hastened to return to Paris.

At Marseilles I saw an old friend, a cavalry General, and his staff, about to sail for Palestine. They were raging at the decision—made by Lloyd George I believe—to send them overseas, just at this moment when Ludendorff's long-expected blow was awaited daily in the North. My diary

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for that day ends with the hope that all soldiers will immediately arise and murder all politicians !

Yet only a few days later the situation was saved for the soldiers by the action of a politician—Milner—when by his personal intervention the unification of the Command of the Allied Forces under Foch was brought about at Doullens, on March 26th, after the terrible blows of the German advance had shattered the British Fifth Army.

The bombardment of Paris by "Big Bertha" began on March 23rd just before the first German attack on the British lines, and continued for months with little pause. The damage done was probably no worse than that caused by the raids, but the psychological effect was greater, partly on account of the bad news which was then coming in from the Front, and partly because of one terrible success which was scored at the beginning. On Good Friday, March 29th, hundreds of poor people were killed or injured by a shell which struck the Church of St. Gervais, while they were at prayer. I believe this incident marked the climax of the Allied disasters, and its occurrence on Good Friday was strangely symbolical.

I returned to Paris in the middle of the British disasters, and was staggered to find that all of my French friends who had not already fled from Paris went out of their way to abuse the English troops, and seemed to take an almost malicious delight in spreading rumours of British reverses, and in hinting at the complete failure of our *morale*. One lady, whom I had known intimately for thirty years, went so far as to write me her insults. I have the letter still. To do her justice, I must admit that she afterwards apologized for having written it, and I promised to forgive her ; but it is easier to forgive than to forget such things.

How strange a people are the French ! The rage of my friend against the English troops was roused, I believe, not by the critical situation of the Allies, but by the fact that the work of our society—her work, as she felt it—had been

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wiped out! The terrible British casualties in this battle to defend French soil amounted to a quarter of a million men, but this did not arouse the slightest compassion. A sense of injury and grievance against England was the dominant note in Paris at that time.

I have kept in my journal, beside the letter from my French friend, two other letters which I received on the same day. One was from my children who were still living with my mother in London, the elder one now secretary to the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, and the younger secretary to Admiral Richmond, then Director of Staff Duties at the Admiralty; and the second from a young English officer at the Front, just out of the Line for a rest after many days' incessant fighting. The calm unruffled cheerfulness of both these letters was a convincing answer to the suggestion that the English *morale* had given way.

One cannot say that the inhabitants of Paris were equally undisturbed. With the first news of the attack had come a panic rush to leave the city.

A funny story was told about a well-known Parisian actor, who was met by some friends at Trouville. They inquired whether he was staying there for his health or because he was to appear in some play. He replied, "Not at all, I have not come for any of the reasons that have caused all the other thousands to leave Paris, I have come simply because I am afraid!"

Towards the end of April, it became clear that the German onslaught had been finally repulsed by the British troops, and the danger seemed to recede for a little. Many fashionable people returned to Paris, and the old life began again with little change, except for the added excitement which they obtained from dashing about in taxis to see the places where the shells of the Big Bertha had burst, in order to watch the crushed bodies of victims being dragged out. People did not go to these scenes in order to help, but merely to look on at the hideous show.

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In the middle of May I learnt that a fresh German onslaught was expected, and the atmosphere grew more tense than ever. It amazed me to find that the people round me could be so oblivious to the coming attack, aimed, as we were soon to learn, at Paris itself. But the War had once more faded into insignificance so far as French society was concerned. The restaurants were packed and entertainments were numerous. One amazing tea-party I remember was given just then to celebrate the *fiançailles* of two Dachshunds. One wore a large green neck ribbon, and the poor tiny creature wore the foolish and self-conscious expression which every dog has when it is made the butt of human jokes. The whole company talked of the affair exactly as one imagines eighteenth-century Ambassadors would have discussed a royal betrothal! Enter the other, who took an immediate dislike to her proposed husband and began snapping and growling at him, to the dismay of the assembly, and the great joy of two English naval officers who had just come in. Curtain!

Paris was not being shelled just at this time, and rumour said this was because the King of Spain had insisted that there should be no more bombardment until the removal of the Spanish Colony from Paris in June. It seems more likely that it was because the first set of long-range guns had become worn out, since from May 16th onwards terrible air raids took place almost every night. I remember the first of them particularly because it began during a concert given in aid of charity at the house of Mademoiselle Dorziat. The pianist was a disabled French officer, and when the warning signals sounded he began to play the fire music from "The Valkyries", and he went on playing Wagner until the raiders were really close, and the bombs could be heard dropping, when he changed to Chopin's Funeral March. We all sat there enthralled, quite heedless of the danger.

Several more raids took place that week, and many afterwards, and we became so used to them at last that I found I could not be bothered even to get out of bed to watch

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the Goths coming over. The bursting anti-aircraft shells meant no more than so many fireworks, and all feeling of danger from the raids disappeared, as far as I was concerned.

Not so the sense of impending calamity at the Front. On May 26th, I noted in my diary that there was not a single officer dining in the hotel, and I guessed that the attack was beginning. The air seemed electric and I was too restless to sleep. I could hear the German gunfire, and thought that it seemed to be coming nearer ; before many days it became alarmingly close. Big Bertha now began again also, and on May 28th I saw one of the shells fall in the Jardin des Tuileries. It made a deafening noise, and the clouds of earth and smoke rose above the tree-tops.

The whole of Society, and in fact all who could afford to do so—about a million people it was said—fled from Paris once more, and only soldiers and the English and American Red Cross and other war workers remained, out of all the people whom I knew. On the evening of May 28th, I walked with Lady Congreve, who was returning that night to her hospital at the Front, round the Place Vendôme and down the Rue de la Paix and Rue Castiglione. It was about half-past eight, and quite light still, but there was not a single human being to be seen anywhere, nor even a vehicle of any kind. Paris was truly deserted. We heard from a friend that night that the Germans had crossed the Aisne and entered Soissons, and that the situation was highly critical.

Big Bertha scored a direct hit on the Madeleine next day ; I heard screams after the shell burst, but apparently it was merely fright, as no one was hurt that time. The Jockey Club was hit soon after, and several other shells fell near by. The Ritz itself was struck once, and a good deal of damage was done.

The bombardment of Paris by gunfire in the daytime and by aeroplanes at night was continuous during these terrible days. All shops and many private houses had paper strips plastered over the windows to keep the shock of the explo-

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sions from splintering the glass, and public statues, etc., were covered with sandbags. The entrance of every cellar had a notice announcing the number of people who might shelter there. The Germans hoped, no doubt, to wear down the nerves of the people of Paris, and to prepare the way for a surrender in the event of a break through on the Marne. But although hospitals and public buildings were struck, and numbers of people killed and injured, the bombardment had no more effect on those who stayed on than the constant banging of a door. It was not shellfire, but the idea of a second German occupation of Paris that finally dismayed the French bourgeoisie. As for the rest, they had already fled.

Real alarm and discontent began to be felt about the beginning of June, however, when rumours spread of the probable removal of the Government to Bordeaux, as in 1914. It was said that even Clemenceau had consented to abandon the city on the grounds of military expediency. I was shocked by the sullen expression of the faces of the hurrying crowds near the stations, and realized how much the people of Paris resented the thought of being deserted by their Government. The idea of the capture of their much-loved city by a victorious German army at this late stage of the War was too much, even for the brave Parisians. The President, M. Poincaré, realizing that the mere threat of abandoning Paris was having a disastrous effect upon *morale*, intervened, and orders were given to the Army to defend the Capital at all costs. I believe that a revolution might have broken out if he had not made this decision then.

The situation at the Front was still critical, and in the beginning of June, Sir Henry Thornton, then Assistant Director-General of Movements and Railways, came to me and urged me to leave Paris. He warned me that I should probably be shot by the Germans, like Nurse Cavell, if I was ever captured by them! I appealed to Lord Milner who was over just then, to know whether I must go. He seemed optimistic about the military position, and sure that the Ger-

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man attack would fail, but he advised me to be ready to start, and promised to send a message to Sir Henry Thornton if the situation became serious. A special code word was invented—"Cherbourg"—I think it was—which would mean, "Please arrange to remove Mrs. Glyn to place of safety."

He seemed very much cheered by the gallantry of the Americans in their first engagement at Cantigny, and wrote a postscript about them in a letter of June 7th: "I am very much struck indeed by what I see of your Americans—splendid men".

Soon after the Armistice, I visited the battlefield of Villers-Cotterets and Chateau-Thierry, where the American troops had fought so valiantly, in company with a British General who knew the whole circumstances of this engagement. He brought tears to my eyes when he described how the young troops had dashed in to counter-attack, and in impossible circumstances had continued fighting to the end. When the ground was recaptured later that day the thousands of gallant boys were found dead, every single one of them lying as they had fallen, with their faces to the enemy.

I told Lord Milner of a proposal, which had been made to me earlier by General Allaire, that I should visit the Base Camp of the American Army at St. Nazaire, and he urged me to accept it, asking me especially to make the men feel how much their help was appreciated by the Allies.

I felt, perhaps a little absurdly, that I did not wish to leave Paris until the danger was over, so I stayed on. However, on June 12th, I received a letter from Lord Milner from London urging me to go:

"I cannot say that I regard Paris as unsafe *yet*," he wrote, "and it may never become so. But what makes me uneasy is that I think, if anything did go wrong, it might come suddenly, without previous warning, thro' some internal trouble which could not be foreseen from here. I am not happy at the thought that you might be depending upon me for a signal which I should not have the knowledge to give

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in time. My advice rather is, that if your work with the Americans can begin now, you should not delay it. I know you would not like to leave Paris, unless you were doing something to help the cause. But as things stand, I really think that you might be rendering more service with the Americans, and certainly your friends would feel easier in their minds."

The same day that I received his letter the glorious news came through that a successful counter-attack organized by General Mangin the day before had at last relieved the strain. The German advance had been finally checked, and it was realized that they had shot their bolt.

Full of intense relief and joy, I started on my visit to the American Base Camps the following week.

## CHAPTER XXV

*The Signing of Peace*

I ENJOYED my visit to the American Base Camps very much, and was greatly impressed with the huge scale of the preparations being made there, and the efficiency of the organization. There was no doubt that the Americans had entered the War in earnest and did not underestimate their task. They had the same grim simplicity of purpose as the rest of the Allies and there was no suggestion of irresolution or half-heartedness about the preparations. America took time to make up her mind to come in to the War, but having put her hand to the plough there was no looking back. She had enlisted "for the duration", and I am convinced that no end other than victory would ever have been sought by her, nor would men, material or effort have been spared. Let no one imagine that the will to win, and the strength and cunning and persistence necessary to do so, will ever be lacking in an American army once it is involved in war. Uncle Sam has inherited the bull-dog spirit of the British race all over the world.

The Army organizers had profited by the tragic mistakes of the English in the early days, when newly-enlisted men were all treated in the same way, and considered as mere units of cannon-fodder, regardless of their qualifications in civil life. In England in 1914 highly-skilled engineers were put to sweep out stables, or allowed to be shot to death in front-line trenches, while mathematical experts who should have been assisting the artillery officers were posted to Labour battalions and made to do the work of navvies.

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Not so the American Army. The greatest precautions were taken to draft each recruit to the branch for which his usual trade most fitted him, and every department of the force was manned by experts in consequence.

This was particularly noticeable in the huge Salvage Depot, over which I was taken at Blois and which impressed me immensely. Each section was directed by an expert in the particular trade, the gum-boot stores by a leading rubber shoe manufacturer, the clothing repairs by the manager of a famous cheap tailoring firm, and so on. They were all enlisted men, getting the ordinary soldier's pay, but their skill was used to save their Government thousands of pounds daily, instead of being cast into the front-line mud.

Another thing which struck me was the persistent use of machines for every possible purpose, so as to economize manpower to the maximum degree. The complete mechanization of every department of an army seems to be mere common sense. Even if the old argument is sound that, when all is said and done, wars are fought and won by the infantry soldier, it is obvious that there will be many more infantry-men available at the right place and the right time if machines have replaced men to the greatest possible extent in all the auxiliary services, and are available to transport the fighting units to the important points in the minimum of time.

No doubt the Generals of the time when railways and breech-loading rifles were a novelty preferred to march their men all the way to the battle-front on their feet, carrying heavy muzzle-loading muskets, than to use troop trains and rifles of a contemporary design. In the Great War, the General Staffs seem to have become accustomed to the idea of utilizing railways, as these were by then nearly a hundred years old, and modern rifles, having been known for fifty years, were also accepted as a part of the necessary equipment; but war was waged against innovations of only twenty years' standing such as the machine-gun, and revolutionary machines such

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as the tank and the bombing aeroplane were treated with scepticism and hostility. In the next war, if ever there is one (which God forbid), I expect that we shall begin again where we left off in 1918, and shall have once more to improvise the necessary mechanical equipment to enable victory to be attained, while our soldiers are massacred in their hundreds of thousands in the attempt to stave off the attacks of heavily armoured tanks with rifle fire !

I saw an American troopship arrive while I was at St. Nazaire and I watched the five thousand men come ashore, a most impressive sight. The soldiers seemed to be all of them fair, grey-eyed, and tanned to a uniform tone of light brown, while their physique was magnificent. They had curiously keen but unsophisticated expressions, and except for their size, they looked more like boys than men. This impression of simplicity and spotless virtue may have been due partly to the oddly clerical cut of the American uniform ! Its high stiff collar fastened right up under the chin in front reminded everyone of the English chaplain's garb, and gave a slightly pious air which matched oddly, when you came to think of it, with the rather Red-Indian looking profiles and masculine bearing of the men.

I was struck by the great difference between the almost universal fairness of these cheerful soldiers and the dark, Southern-European or Jewish look of the majority of the people in the streets of New York ; and I thought how little I must know of the States, in spite of my repeated visits to them, since I would never have said that this English-looking type predominated there to this remarkable extent. To judge by the example of young manhood which marched off this troopship on to French soil, the great majority of the American people must be fair, blue-eyed and honest looking ! Then I remembered that these splendid boys were not a true sample of the nation as a whole, but only of those members of it whose magnificent idealism had prompted them to travel three thousand miles over the sea to give their lives in defence

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of the abstract principle of international justice, without hope or thought of earthly reward either for themselves or for their country. There seems to be some connection after all, between Anglo-Saxon blood and the willingness to sacrifice all to the abstract ideal of service to humanity.

Life in Paris was increasingly gay as it became evident to all that the tide of war had turned in favour of the Allies. The successful advance by the Australians at Villers-Bretonneux was hailed with especial joy I remember, and the abuse of the English by members of French society, to which I had become quite accustomed by then, at last died away. The French were always especially glad to praise the achievements of the Dominion soldiers, and to infer their superiority over English troops, but this was, perhaps, only natural. The story of English decadence had been told for so long in France that it would be strange if it had obtained no credence, and on the whole I believe that the feeling of friendship and solidarity between the two nations was wonderfully strong, considering that this, with the exception of the Crimean War, was the first important occasion upon which French and English soldiers had fought on the same side since the Crusades ; and even then they were usually quarrelling !

Apart from a few brief visits to my mother and the children in London, I stayed in France until the end of 1919 ; when the Peace Conference was sitting I left Paris and took a flat in Versailles, as this was undoubtedly the most interesting place to be in during that fateful year. I had always loved Versailles, and used often to come there all alone with my maid, and stay at the Hôtel des Reservoirs if I wanted to be undisturbed, when writing novels, before the War. Something about the atmosphere suited my royalist ideas, and the intimate knowledge of the life of the French court which I had gained from the Memoirs of St. Simon in my Jersey days gave me a special interest in every detail of the Palace.

I had long since learnt to curb my ecstasies about it,

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however! On one occasion, before I learnt wisdom in this respect, I took a charming young man, a typical "Paul", good-looking, sweet and sound asleep, to see the Château, and brought him to the top of the great steps which lead down to the *tapis vert* before I would let him turn and gaze upon my precious Palace. "Now look round", I almost whispered, expecting to see him stiffen with wonder at the beauty of the sight. He stared for a minute, and then exclaimed :

"By Jove, what a lot of lightning conductors!"

Several years afterwards I went to the same spot with Lord Curzon. It was the first time that he had seen Versailles since he was a boy.

"Now," I said to myself, the influence of his scholarship affecting even my thoughts, "now I shall hear something lofty and erudite, a fitting comment on this splendid monument."

"Ready," I called when we reached the place from where the best view could be obtained.

He turned and gazed for much longer than the young man had done, and I grew more and more expectant.

"Architecturally correct, but monotonous," he announced.

So that was that! And henceforth I kept my feelings about the beauties of Versailles to myself.

During those months of negotiation, when the fates of so many nations and peoples were being settled, for good or ill, I was privileged to hear something of what went on behind the scenes, and to meet some of the principal figures of the Peace Conference.

These are some extracts from my diary recording my first impressions of these famous personalities.

First and foremost, Mr. Lloyd George. I met him at dinner one night at the house in the Rue Nilot where he stayed. Sir William Orpen was there too, and Miss Stevenson, Mrs. Carey Evans and Sir Thomas Sutherland. This is what I wrote :

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" My first impression was that he was much smarter and better dressed than his pictures would suggest, and his manners far more gracious than I had imagined. His voice is charming, and has the most attractive tones in it, but although his English is perfect, he struck me as such a purely Celtic type that I felt that I was talking to some foreigner who spoke English well rather than to the British Prime Minister ; in fact, it seemed almost incongruous to imagine him in this rôle, although his great ability is self-evident. He was very gracious and friendly, and told me that he had met me at the Jeune's in the days before he became well known. I am ashamed to say that I had forgotten it. I was such a bigoted Conservative in those days, that I would have looked down upon any Liberal M.P., no doubt, as beneath my consideration!

" The conversation was nothing but chaff at first, but soon the P.M. began to tell us of his horror at the disgraceful way in which the French had thrown stones at the departing German delegates. He spoke strongly about the ungenerous vindictiveness of the French and I could see that his automatic sympathy for the under-dog was turning him away from the French point of view about the terms of peace.

" After dinner he talked to me for some time while Miss Stephenson played the piano. He curled up his legs on the tiny hard French sofa, and leaned across the little table towards my chair, gazing intently at me as he spoke. I noticed that the pupils of his eyes kept expanding and contracting, producing a peculiar, hypnotic effect. As far as I could tell, throughout our conversation he gave me his undivided attention, and this remarkable power of concentration struck me as the most wonderful of all his qualities. Most men are too vain to pay this compliment to a woman, but I feel sure that Lloyd George devotes the whole of his great capacities to everything which he undertakes, and never misses a point by failing to attend to the evidence of a witness. There is a good deal to be said in favour of a legal training for statesmen, after all."

This is the impression of him which I wrote down that night :

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"A genius, filled with vision, who relies upon his great natural intelligence and his ability to pick the brains of others rather than upon the real cultivation of his own mind. Mr. Jowett, the great Oxford tutor, would, I am sure, have said, 'Oh!—the next essay *please!*' if Mr. Lloyd George had been his pupil, but I doubt if even he could have stamped a classical outlook upon this vital personality as he did upon his other scholars.

"Lloyd George is genuinely humorous, but is without a touch of the cynical eighteenth-century wit and sense of the fitness of things. I can see that this is an advantage in his case for his enthusiasm has therefore been free to rise to heights which the self-conscious Englishman could never reach. He is able to believe that all he does is right, and this complete self-confidence allows him to achieve miracles impossible to cooler minds.

"Although he is so obviously and intensely virile, there is a great deal of the woman in his character, and he handles situations rather as an inspired woman would do than by the methods of ordinary men. I feel that his views and beliefs are sincerely Christian, but that his actions are controlled only partially by his highest self, personal ambition and the fear of Mrs. Grundy being the most potent influences in his daily life; although noble ideals constantly arise in his mind as fine phrases do to his lips.

"I could not help contrasting him in my imagination with the only two other British statesmen whom I have known well, George Curzon and Alfred Milner. These two classical scholars were both of them in their different ways reserved, cold, exclusive, cultivated, experienced and wise; and both were totally devoid of the power of popular appeal. Although just as sincerely patriotic as Lloyd George and, I believe, quite as able, yet neither of them managed to conceive and carry out such sweeping reforms, nor to serve their country in its hour of need in the supreme measure achieved by this little Welsh wizard—no, not wizard; the word which rises to my mind as I write of him is rather *Troubadour!* Perhaps it was his long hair and well-known love of music that gave me this odd impression, perhaps some

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momentary insight into an earlier incarnation. Whatever the cause, it was rather as a famous poet and minstrel, reciting his historic lays to the accompaniment of a strange musical instrument in the flickering firelight of a Castle Hall, that I found myself picturing that peculiar Celtic visage, and never as the successor of Chatham and Peel, presiding over the British Cabinet at No. 10, Downing Street!"

It is such men as Curzon and Milner who keep the feet of mankind within the orbit of civilization ; such men as Lloyd George who widen that orbit and alter the standards of all generations to come. I pay this tribute not to his war achievements, great as they are, but to the vision and courage which made him battle to introduce the systems of health and unemployment insurance, and old-age pensions, which have done more in twenty years than was accomplished in the previous twenty centuries to reduce the physical and mental suffering and fear of destitution which used to darken the lives of the great majority of the human race.

President Wilson I met only once, and I had no opportunity of speaking to him myself, although I have listened to him talking to others on several occasions. This, for what it is worth, is my comment written in my diary after I first saw him.

"Wilson's face is a mask. I feel that no one believes in him less than he does himself, and that only a quarter of all that he says and puts forward is real. The cultivated theorist in him has made him set out to accomplish a great task which he has now realized that he is incapable of bringing to fruition, but he has not the courage to adapt his theories to fit the facts, and continues to wear an air of supreme confidence and authority which would be comic if it were not so tragic in its consequences. Despite his mask-like cheerfulness, I gained an impression of disappointment and of dreadful inward anxiety. There is a touch of Pan in him so carefully hidden and suppressed that it only shows clearly in his sudden automatic smile. The mistake which all the Allies have made

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has been in treating him with too much respect, as if his views were in reality those of the American people. I am quite sure that they are not, and that no good can come of treating them as if they were, just because he happens to have been elected President some time ago. Yet his original vision, even if born, like St. Paul, out of due time, and distorted by its interpretation, was a fine one."

Of all the foreign statesmen engaged upon the preparation of the Peace Treaty, the one who impressed me the most was undoubtedly Venizelos. Here was a real wizard, for he created the greatest confidence and trust in all who met him, and bent everyone to his will. This is what I wrote about him, after sitting next him at dinner, and conversing with him for the greater part of an evening :

" He gave me the impression of honesty, and of absence of self-seeking rare amongst this strangely mixed crowd of delegates. He is wise and deliberate, and curiously un-Latin in type. Can it be that the blood and spirit of the old Greeks have come out in him after all these centuries? He wears the velvet glove so successfully that no casual observer could guess what it conceals. Perhaps an iron hand—perhaps not ; who can tell ? Better not to risk it, is what all must feel, for I am told that his influence here is immense, and that all the Big Five follow his advice.

" There is no trace of Latin gallantry about his conversation ; he makes no difference in his tone when he addresses men or women, but speaks quietly, upon whatever topic appears to be of interest to the general company.

" He seemed physically tired, but this is true of all the people here. The burden of framing the Peace is greater than that of winning the War I do believe."

Another page in my diary concerns Hughes, the Australian delegate, and is rather amusing :

" How I wonder what sixth sense enables very deaf people to hear numbers of things in the conversation which are of

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interest to them, but nothing upon subjects to which it would be inconvenient to reply ? I noticed to-night that Hughes never missed a word that Doctor Dillon said which mattered, but seemed to be quite unable to hear any questions concerning Australian opinion about economic questions ! He always answered about something else, looking as innocent as a baby fox ! He is a very shrewd man. Listening to the conversation at these dinners one might imagine that some of the members of the Conference are being most indiscreet, while others are models of sagacity, and yet others embodiments of crafty astuteness ; whereas in reality it is often the other way round, and the seemingly frank ones are the most perfect of deceivers ! ”

I believed that the cleverest of all the personages at the Peace Conference was the late Lord Riddell. He reminded me of Voltaire, and his cynical views were often sharply refreshing, but he was more approachable than most of the rest. Here is one of many entries in my diary about him :

“ If anything I have said has struck home and convinced him that the idea is good, he will not appear interested, or answer directly, but after awhile he will return to the subject and say ‘ So you think so-and-so—tell me why ? ’ Even then he will make no direct comment, but after perhaps a week he will say, ‘ Oh you know, I acted upon what you told me the other day,’ and will describe the results, in his queer casual way. What a very strange man.”

I am indebted to him for one of the most interesting experiences of my life, for he obtained me a Press permit to witness the actual signature of the Peace in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on June 28th, 1919. I was contributing regularly to his papers at that time, so I was not merely masquerading as a Reporter, but I have always felt gratified at having received this honour, which was, I believe, granted to only one other woman.

I was much excited beforehand and thought nothing of

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the physical ordeal involved by having to stand so long upon a precarious perch awaiting the great moment when the ceremony would begin. But when at last it came and one by one the delegates advanced to the table to append their signatures to the Treaty, a sense of foreboding overcame me, and the emptiness of the whole affair was the one thought in my mind. The words of Burns' *Ode to a Mouse* kept coming into my head :

“ The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley.”

In an article which appeared shortly afterwards in the *Ladies' Field* I wrote the sadly prophetic words :

“ As I stood there upon the tottering bench, feeling that I must take care to be able to keep my balance, a sadness fell upon me. I did not want to see any more. It seemed as if the peace of the world must be as insecure as my own footing upon the bench had been.”

I will end this chapter with my description of the whole scene, which appeared in Lord Riddell's paper *The News of the World* on the day after the ceremony :

### “ NO PRUSSIAN PRIDE

“ A hushed hum of voices, the grave faces of the statesmen and delegates silent at their table. Clemenceau's jaw set firm, dark-coated pressmen at one end of the Hall of Mirrors, guests at the other, the only note of brightness the helmets of the National Guard, and here and there a uniform of khaki or blue.

“ That was the first impression.

“ Then waiting, waiting, waiting, with increasing tension of nerves, and at last, from the end by the Queen's apartments, five depressed-looking men emerge, frock-coated, be-spectacled, unprepossessing. These are the Germans. Look at them well.

“ The fair one's lips are trembling, and the tall thin man,

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with his eyes close together, frowns. But they are very quiet and very pale, only there is some cynical look in the fourth man's eyes. Is he thinking of a scrap of paper which the five must sign? Who knows?

"They rise suddenly, believing their moment has come, but subside again when the ringing voice of France's saviour begins his short harangue. Crisp and trenchant and powerful, the words fall on our ears: 'An agreement of peace between the Allied and Associated Governments and the German State.'

"The German State."

"Not the proud kingdom of Prussia, or the Empire of other days, but just a new-born republic, which to-morrow may be gone. No splendid Hohenzollerns in brilliant uniforms bursting with pride sit there, but huddled in their places, five plebeian German men. Then, when the short statement is ended, and its translation in English proclaimed, the five rise reluctantly and walk forward to sign. How quickly it all passes, this forever historic scene! They affix their signatures hurriedly, as though in haste to be gone, and then the ignoble figures file back to their places again and the thin, upright form of President Wilson is seen moving forward to sign. How he smiles as he returns to his place at the table, followed by Colonel House! Is he thinking that a burden has fallen from his shoulders and that he can now go home?

"How slowly they walk, the Englishmen, and how unmoved they are! Mr. Lloyd George seems grave and solemn as he bends to take the pen. Then Mr. Balfour's stately grey head can be seen advancing, and Lord Milner, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Barnes. What are they all thinking of, also? Shall we ever know? Then the silence grows denser than ever, and the Frenchmen rise in their turn. Clemenceau, Pichon, Klotz, Tardieu, and Cambon, each bends down to sign. Next it is the turn of the smaller nations. And so at last, an end. But the climax has passed with Clemenceau, and the great deed is done. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*"

CHAPTER XXVI

*Some Post-War Wanderings in Egypt and Spain*

**I**N February of 1920 I went back to Egypt for a brief visit following an invitation from my dear friend, Lady Congreve, with whom I stayed. Her husband General Congreve, V.C., was General Officer Commanding the Forces in Egypt at that time, Lord Allenby was High Commissioner, and Lord Milner was also in Cairo on a special Mission. He wrote me a farewell letter just before he sailed giving an amusingly British reason for his departure to Egypt.

"I don't believe the Mission can do much good," he wrote. "First of all I was going in October, then I was firmly convinced I was not going out at all, now I am shot out at a moment's notice because the recalcitrant 'Nationalists' have declared they won't have me—Send me a message to deliver to your friend the Sphinx, and pray that the Egyptian malcontents may aim badly—they generally do!"

When I met him in Egypt I found him thoroughly bored with the shoal of detectives who followed him everywhere, but safe and sound, thanks no doubt to their constant vigil. But oh! what a contrast was this trip to my last visit in the peaceful, happy days of Lord Cromer! Even the Sphinx seemed to have lost some of her eternal serenity, and the atmosphere was full of unrest, while the weather was cold and forbidding. Just as the rosy sunset light of the late Victorian era had found its most perfect reflection in the sands

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of this ancient land, so the gloomy unease of the dark hour before the dawn of the new Golden Age seemed to be especially manifest in the bleak, troubled atmosphere of Egypt in 1920.

I discovered that the King of Egypt was the brother of the kind Prince Hussein in whose beautiful garden I had spent so many happy hours after my illness in 1902, a fact which I had not realized before I arrived. He was gracious enough to remember me, and invited me to a magnificent banquet given for Lord Milner at his palace, which I enjoyed immensely and was honoured by having a ten minutes' conversation with the King. There were nearly 100 guests, and we sat round a huge horseshoe-shaped table. I was struck with the simplicity and perfection of the dinner and the arrangements, and the absence of the rich food and ceremonial atmosphere to which I had become accustomed at official functions in Russia. The china and glass and flowers might have been seen in any good English country house, and there was dignity without formality. The service was the most perfect I have ever seen anywhere, and the whole dinner took only forty minutes! There was a reminiscence of the Arabian Nights, however, about the enormous number of the men-servants who waited upon us with such drilled perfection, dressed in scarlet and gold Turkish costumes, and about the way the dishes were brought in at a quick run, held high in the air above their heads. Clayton would have delighted in the whole scene, and the hot, perfect food. How he used to detest the lukewarm dishes and slow waiting of most dinner parties!

The Crown Prince (now King Carol) of Roumania was visiting Egypt while I was there, and many gay parties and balls were given in his honour to which I went, and which I enjoyed very much. He transmitted an invitation from his mother, Queen Marie, whom I had the honour of knowing in Paris, to visit his country, and I have always regretted that I have not been able to take advantage of this kind invitation.

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I scarcely know what it was that gave me the strong impression of gloom and stress, or why everything seemed so changed in the eighteen years since my last visit, for everyone was more than kind to me. I was charmed by the dignity and sweetness of Lady Allenby, a worthy upholder of the prestige of English women abroad, while the Irish warm-heartedness of my dear hostess, Lady Congreve, was more than delightful. It was no one's fault that I felt so thankful to board the steamer and to shake the dust of Egypt from my feet after a stay of only four weeks. It was some strange sense of unease, which I can only attribute to my subconscious reaction to the disturbed psychic influences in the country at this time.

After returning from Egypt I set off almost at once on a most delightful visit to Spain, at the invitation of Queen Ena, by whose gracious kindness I was enabled to see the splendid Easter ceremonies of the Court.

The first of these, the washing of the Beggars' Feet by the King and Queen, took place at Madrid on the Thursday before Easter, and was one of the quaintest, most impressive sights that I have ever seen.

In a beautifully-carpeted gallery, the Halberdiers, in magnificent uniforms like those of the Swiss Guards at the Court of Louis XIV, stood like statues, holding back a crowd of people packed against the walls. The custom of thus allowing the populace in to witness the royal ceremonies dated, I was told, from the days of Philip V, the grandson of Louis XIV, who brought with him from the French Court all the traditional arrangements and etiquette which then prevailed there, including this custom of allowing some unselected members of the public to be present at all Court events, even, in the case of France, the births of the royal children!

After a moment, a gorgeous procession appeared, while the Halberdiers' band played a slow weird march. First came a page, dressed like Cinderella's footman, carrying the Royal Prayer Books, then a group of Gentlemen Ushers and

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Chamberlains in white breeches and coats covered with gold, carrying their feathered hats. Next the Grandees of Spain, a glittering mass of splendour, some in the eighteenth-century Court Dress, some in modern uniforms of Guards and Lancers, and some in the picturesque garb of their Mediæval Brotherhoods, dating from the days of the Crusades. All were covered with orders and decorations and all wore their hats, for this was their especial privilege. They were a most stately set of men, and walked with a slow, measured, rhythmic step which was quite peculiar and extremely dignified. Next came the Infantes of Spain, and finally the King and Queen, the King in a Lancer Uniform, the Queen in cloth of silver with a long silver train hanging from her shoulders and blazing with magnificent jewels. She wore a high diamond crown above her golden hair, and a white lace veil falling from it in graceful folds, and she looked truly beautiful. Then followed the Court ladies in *décolleté* dresses and high combs and mantillas, with jewels almost approaching the magnificence of Russia, and wearing also, strangely enough, scarlet orders across their breasts, like the Russian Court ladies. They were all dark, handsome and dignified looking, and the whole procession amply fulfilled my wildest "Cinderella" dreams.

The kind Lady-in-Waiting who was in charge of me, rushed me on through the Palace rooms, after the procession had passed, to our places in the great hall where the actual ceremony was to occur. The space on the right of the Altar of the great hall was packed with the populace, that on the left with Ambassadors and members of the Court in full Court dress, and veil. On either side of the hall were raised stages, on each of which stood a long table, with seats. Each table was laid with twelve places, and twelve blue and white china ewers filled with wine (looking exactly like bedroom jugs!). Tribunes were erected on either side of the Altar, in one of which we sat, while below these, in a semi-circle to the right and left, sat the twelve "beggars", decently

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but shabbily dressed old men and women in black, with white cotton stockings.

The Archbishop and Papal Nuncio walked first up to the Altar, on which were two silver ewers and basins, and towels, neatly folded, and edged with beautiful lace.

When the Procession entered, the King and Queen advanced to the Altar, and the King's Chamberlain took a big towel from the Archbishop and pinned it round the King, while the Mistress of the Robes did the same to the Queen, really a most quaint part of the proceedings. Meanwhile twelve Grandees on one side, and twelve Duchesses on the other, had each knelt down in front of one of the beggars and removed the shoe and stocking from one foot. Then the Archbishop took one basin and ewer and towel, and the Papal Nuncio the other, and the ceremony itself began, the Archbishop and the King passing down the row of the men, and the Papal Nuncio and the Queen down the row of the women. In his glorious magenta and purple robes and cerise biretta the Papal Nuncio bent and poured water from the silver ewer over each beggar's foot in turn, while the Queen knelt before each poor old woman and dried her foot, kissing the instep as she finished. She did it all with perfect grace, and no shade of self-consciousness.

When all this religious part of the ceremony was over, the beggars' feast began—and such a feast! The menu was Gargantuan, about twenty-four courses, and enormous portions were provided. The King and Queen served it all to the beggars themselves—but—and here I rubbed my eyes, and wondered whether I was in Wonderland after all—the beggars did not really eat anything! As each dish was put before them it was immediately removed untouched. “Alice—Pudding : Pudding—Alice! Remove the Pudding!” was the order of the day. The dishes were lifted by the Grandees and Duchesses, and were handed to waiting servants at the bottom of the steps, and I was assured that the food was then placed in a huge basket for each beggar to take away. In

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practice, apparently, they always sold their share to the waiting crowd and made a handsome sum by doing so, as they were given not only the food, but the silver knife, fork and spoon, and the huge jugs of wine as well.

I have described this first of many wonderful ceremonies, which I witnessed that week in detail, because I think it was the most perfect of them all and the most typical of Royal Spain. The rest are all fully described in my book *Letters from Spain*. It was wonderful to think that it had been performed in just the same way on every Thursday before Easter for hundreds of years, and it grieves me to know that all this beautiful and rather touching ceremonial is now a thing of the past.

I am convinced that pageantry is an important part of the life of a nation, and should not be given up. The total abandonment of all such public functions in America is, I feel sure, one of the reasons why the law is held in such little respect there. The subconscious mind is always impressed by fine ceremonial, just as it is by the dignity of complete simplicity ; but while the perfection of character which commands respect through simplicity is rare, the trappings of majesty can maintain dignity even when the figure which they clothe is not in itself noble. Thus the respect for the Constitution and the traditions engendered by the greatness of one ruler or judge can be perpetuated in the time of a perhaps less worthy successor by the actual descent of the Prophet's mantle upon him in the shape of the Coronation Robes, or full-bottomed wig. It is true that such men as Abraham Lincoln require no sceptre with which to sway their people's hearts ; but how many Lincolns can be hoped for by one nation in a thousand years ? Not more than one, I fear. He set a standard much too high for any unanointed head to maintain, and I am convinced that robes and ceremonies, even a few orders and decorations, would have helped materially to increase the respect in which the Embassies and Courts of Law of the United States are held.

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Spain, of all countries, should beware of abandoning this great source of national strength and unity. The religious ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church may still, no doubt, provide sufficient satisfaction for the deep, primitive need for order and colour and rhythm in the people's hearts, as Protestant simplicity could never do, and while the Church still retains its power in Spain it may be that all will be well, despite the loss of Royal pageantry ; but I believe that nothing but harm can follow if so Southern a people attempt too soon to rid themselves of the support of the traditional and emotional scenes in which the whole nature of the race has been expressed since history began. Even the comparatively cold, logical French people have lived on maimed, as a man without a nose, since they have stripped themselves of all the dignities of robes and rank in Church and State.

The onrushing tide of unfettered thought which has swept through so many countries, in recent times, so often to the ruin of all their previous qualities, did not seem to have reached Spain when I was there only fifteen short years ago, perhaps partly on account of Spanish neutrality in the War ; and despite revolutions and disturbances and blood I cannot believe that this great quality of old-world dignity and earnest faith can yet have passed away.

The greatest lady and the poorest peasant then seemed to share the same simple views as to their duties in life, and the problems which trouble more modern types of society did not exist. There was no doubt that the whole nation believed that Motherhood was the highest mission of woman, and flirtations after marriage were rare, even in the highest society, since they were still universally condemned. The majority of Spanish women of all classes were, or at least appeared to be, happy and content with the rôle of wife and mother. Even the most highly educated amongst the women were really religious, and very much influenced by their priests. Speculative theories were not discussed and unorthodox efforts at spiritual emancipation were not en-

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couraged. The same complete faith animated rich and poor, and just as the most ragged beggar-woman would give her last sou for a flower with which to deck the image of the Virgin on a fête day, so a Duchess in her latest model from Paris and her Reboux hat—all Spanish women are perfectly and expensively dressed it seems—would give golden rays set with diamonds to adorn the Virgin's crown. The piety was real and impressive.

Although carefully chaperoned on all occasions, the girls before marriage seemed to have a wonderfully good time; it was they and not the young married women who occupied the centre of the field of attention of the young men, and a romantic atmosphere was preserved so far as serious courtship was concerned. The marriages all appeared to be unions of inclination and not of mere convenience as in France. If money came into the matter at all the fact was kept in the background and not flaunted in cynical fashion. The pleasant period during which the man pays attentions to the girl in order to win her favour was prolonged for many months before any open declaration of love was made, or any definite engagement decided upon. A man would become attached to a girl, and follow her about, courting her in every possible way in public, rather like what in the country in England is called "walking out". Perhaps he could not see her very often in private, but he would dance with her at every ball, and play tennis or golf with her at every party, and during all the time of their courtship he would take pains not to offend her by paying attention to any other girl. When eventually it was deemed that this testing-time had lasted long enough, there would be a formal betrothal, almost as binding as marriage itself, and finally the wedding, a ceremony deeply infused with religious feeling. Marriages resulting from this system seemed to me to be extremely happy. I felt that all was arranged as things were meant to be in Spain where marriage customs and traditions were concerned. Girls should be pretty and have nice clothes,

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and should be admired and courted by men, although remaining unsullied before marriage ; and wives should love their husbands and be faithful to them, and have numbers of children, and love them dearly ; such a system is right, and makes for happiness and contentment in a community. Originality and freedom of thought and the general emancipation of women so highly prized to-day have in many cases, I think, been bought too dearly by the sacrifice of the old religious ideals of marriage.

Somehow, sometime, these ideals will come back to the sophisticated world, because they are right, and all right things must win in the end. There will be no return to fettered lives and thoughts, but those with clear insight will gradually perceive that the natural solution to the complexities of modern life is simply love. Then, having seen it, they will sit down happily, like a child playing " hunt-the-thimble " who has seen the prize and sits down proudly to show that she has found what all are seeking, and has found it ahead of all the rest. By the time that this wisdom comes to those who have fought through to it out of the morass of modern scepticism, it is probable that the old, childlike faith, which used to exist in Spain, will have been swept away, for nothing can be maintained indefinitely that is not based upon freedom. We may yet come to consider Spain as the land of divorces, and New York as the city of faithful couples ! Who can tell ?

I think it probable that the aspect of Spanish society which I saw was rather an ideal one, and perhaps I am describing the standard as higher than it really was. I cannot pretend to know Spain, after two short months—I returned in 1922 for another delightful visit—with the same intimate knowledge born of long experience that I came to have of America and France, and relatively, after six months' continuous residence, of Russia. I merely record my impressions derived from these exceptionally happy experiences under the most wonderful auspices ; in these circumstances I was very favourably

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impressed by the society ladies, whom I found charming, polite, perfectly dressed, and never unkind and spiteful to or about each other. Malicious gossip seemed to be unknown in the circle of Court Society in Spain as in Russia, where this delightful freedom from petty spite had done more than anything else to rouse my affection and sympathy for those tragic, doomed people. In other respects, however, the two Societies were very different. Divorce, for example, was common in Russia and religious conviction more rare.

One other distinction between Russia and Spain is very marked, and very noticeable to the visiting stranger. In Russia, as in America, every servant whether in hotel or private house has, figuratively speaking, only one hand available to carry out his duties, the other being permanently held out to receive his just rewards almost before they are earned. In Russia even the guards at the turn of the stairs in the Royal Palaces expected to receive a *douceur* every day!

The enormous amount of small change—not very small either!—which was required to smooth the path of the stranger in these two otherwise so very opposite countries was quite astonishing. In Spain, however, the spirit was entirely different. I was once ignorant enough to offer the usual reward to the maid of the Lady-in-Waiting who was in charge of me, and from whom I had received much kind attention; she turned scarlet and refused with dignity and obviously hurt pride. Genuine thanks and appreciative praise of the service rendered were in all cases, I found, more welcome than gold, and if tips were to be accepted, they must be offered humbly as a gift to a superior, and carefully disguised. How I admired this proud, free spirit, so much more truly independent than that of the cheeky American lift-boys who used to chew gum at me, answer me back rudely, and then hold out their hand for payment for every little service, when I first went to America.

I did not form the same high opinion of the Spanish men as I did of the women, although they were undoubtedly *men*,

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and I saw none of the unsexed dolls with weird tastes who try to impose their unpleasant personalities upon society which you meet occasionally in England, nor of the artistic, feminine type of *petit maître* with which every drawing-room used to be crowded in France.

I gathered from many conversations with the women whom I came to know best that Spanish men love passionately rather than tenderly, and do not comprehend that soul relationship in love which delights in the woman as a companion and not merely as a mate. They treat their own wives in a dignified way, and show very great devotion to their mothers, but they seem to feel strangely little respect for womanhood in the abstract. Their conversation about women disgusts the average clean-minded Englishman, and such perfect reverence for the entire sex as I found amongst the miners of Nevada would, I should think, be unknown in Spain. This contemptuous attitude towards the sex as a whole is, I suppose, a relic of the Moorish influence. I have often wondered why so little fuss is made by the women of Europe over the memory of Charles Martel, who, history relates, delivered Western Europe from the domination of the Moslem invaders of France in 732 and thus assuredly rescued the ideal of womanhood from falling to the degraded status which it occupies in the mind of the Mohammedan.

Under the mixed influences, past and present, of Islam and Roman Catholicism, the Spaniard makes a generous, passionate, jealous and often unfaithful husband, but his wandering fancies are seldom turned towards the women of his wife's world, and grateful that this insult at least is spared her, there seems to be very little resentment felt on the part of the wife against his infidelities, so long as children are not lacking.

Of course the Spanish men are cruel—that is so well known as to be almost trite, but it is sometimes imagined that their cruelty is on a purely physical level. This was not my impression. In 1920 the new custom of protecting the

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horses from the horns of the bull at the bull-fights had not yet been introduced and I witnessed the full horror of the old method, which allowed horse after horse to be gored to death in the arena. It was terrible, of course, and still more shocking to me was the explanation offered that the sacrifice was justified because the horses were of no value and would be slaughtered in any case. It is also impossible not to feel profound sympathy with the poor gallant bull, who has no sporting chance to escape from his tormentors at any stage of the proceedings. But by far the greatest exhibition of cruelty in the whole performance seemed to me to be that shown by the crowd towards the Matador. He was groaned at, and even hissed for the smallest error of judgment or skill by that merciless audience, and no allowances were made for failure in a single point, although the risk of a horrible death was his at every moment, and accidents were common. The crowd even shrieked "Coward" at one man who, with an obviously untired bull, delayed his final stroke beyond the usual time.

Whatever may be said of bull-fighting as a sport, the men who take part in it are incredibly brave, I think, and it is impossible not to be thrilled by their gallantry. It is not difficult to understand why no government could with impunity put an end to these mediæval but intensely exciting shows in the present condition of affairs in Spain.

I also witnessed a cock-fight when I was in Seville. While the sufferings which the poor birds inflicted upon each other were horrible, there was something inspiring about their undefeatable courage, and at least it was their own nature which was obliging them to endure such pain, and not the will of their masters, as in the case of the horses in the bull-ring. I rejoice in the spread of greyhound racing, in which nothing but the dog's own instinct impels him to use his greatest efforts, as in the case of the fighting cock, and so no cruelty is thus involved.

The essence of cruelty, it seems to me, is not pain itself

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but the infliction of avoidable pain by the strong upon the weak for reasons of their own. A doctor who carries out a painful treatment roughly or without anaesthetic when this relief could have been provided is, I believe, genuinely cruel, in a more serious sense than were those cheering Spaniards who shouted to encourage their champions in the cockpit at Seville ; but no doubt such sights help to brutalize a people, and probably the amount of suffering permitted in Spanish hospitals is much greater than in England as a result of the generally low standard of sympathy for suffering in man or beast.

I had the honour of having several audiences with the King and Queen while I was in Spain, and also with Queen Christina. I was immensely impressed by the fine dignity and manliness of the King, and the beauty and graciousness of the Queen, and also by the way in which both fulfilled their public duties, and really cared about their people. I would like to end this chapter with a few words of appreciation of that truly great lady, Queen Christina, as I think that the contribution which she made to the world's ideal of Queenship, which now stands so splendidly high, is not always appreciated in England.

A stranger in a troubled country, she was only twenty-seven when her husband, King Alphonso XII, died, leaving her to await, alone, the birth of her son, Alphonso XIII, whose unusual destiny it was to be born a King. From the moment of his birth the full burden of statesmanship fell upon her slender shoulders, yet she was able to bring her Regency to a successful close and to hand over the reins of government to her young son with perfect grace when the time came. She seemed to possess what I call a "world brain", that is, one which views all things in the light of abstract reality, and not of personal likes and dislikes, and she discussed the most modern subjects entirely without prejudice or trace of bigotry, in spite of her obviously deep-rooted religious feelings. I felt that a child could come to her with



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a broken toy, a woman with a broken heart, or a savant with a new discovery, and all might be sure of her sympathy and real understanding. I felt in her presence a warm atmosphere of kindness and peace, in which resignation had taken the place of joy, and happiness had been attained through duty nobly done. The life of a young widowed Queen can be no easy one, debarred for evermore from pleasure and love, although not cloistered and protected from temptation like a nun, but obliged to face the world and all its difficulties alone. With what dignity and devotion to the interests of her adopted country Queen Christina of Spain lived through those long anxious, joyless years, and how finely she fulfilled the Spaniard's ideal of true motherhood, all the world should know.

## CHAPTER XXVII

*Hollywood in the Early Days*

NOT long after my return from Spain my agent in London wrote to me in Paris to say that the principal man then in the moving picture industry, Mr. Jesse Lasky, had decided to invite some well-known authors and playwrights from Europe to come out to Hollywood. He hoped that after studying the technical and other problems of this new medium for the presentation of literary and dramatic ideas to a vast and growing public, they would be able to write scenarios especially suited for the screen. My agent gave me a list of those who had already accepted the invitation, amongst them Somerset Maugham, Edward Knoblock, Sir Gilbert Parker and Maeterlinck as well as "Gouverneur Morris" and Gertrude Atherton. The plan was that we should proceed at once to Hollywood, spend as long as seemed necessary in studying the technical problems of film production, and then each write a scenario and supervise its translation into a film. The payment offered was \$10,000 per picture, plus travelling expenses, and the prospect of a renewal of the contract on better terms if the film proved successful.

I was immensely attracted by the proposal and decided at once to accept, although I was entirely ignorant concerning motion pictures, and had only seen one or two war films. I felt certain that a great new art was being born, which would profoundly influence the whole world, and I was delighted to have an opportunity to learn about it, and to be connected with it. Above all, I felt that here was the unique oppor-

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tunity for which I had always longed of helping to spread the ideals and the atmosphere of romance and glamour into the humblest homes ; as indeed it was. I am always proud to think that I was never one of those who belittled the artistic possibilities of the cinematograph industry, or underestimated its enormous potential power for good and evil in the life of mankind.

It was a considerable adventure for me, a lone widow, no longer young, to venture forth into this strange utterly different world of Western America, and to attempt to master the intricacies of a new and highly technical craft, but it was just such an adventure as I had always loved, and I set off quite undaunted by the troubles and difficulties which I was told would beset me on arrival.

Perhaps if I had known quite how severe my trials would be, and how serious the dangers were, I should not have set off quite so gaily ! But no doubt I would have gone all the same.

The representative of Mr. Lasky's Company, "Famous-Players-Lasky", as it was then called, met me in New York in the autumn of 1920, and it was arranged that I should go at once to the Hollywood hotel, where some of the others had already arrived.

I do not know whether this hotel is still in existence. It was a homely place in those days, with clean bright rooms, obliging waitresses and quite good food. It was kept by the funniest, most sporting old lady of over eighty, who ran it extremely well.

I was much struck by the fresh, well-nourished look of everyone in America, and this brought home to me the serious shortage of food which the War must have caused in the belligerent countries. That the faces of the people of Europe and especially of the English should still seem haggard in comparison with those of the normal, healthily-fed people of America two whole years after the end of the struggle, was a striking proof of the real privations and the

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terrible strain which the War had imposed upon those countries seriously engaged in it.

In Hollywood, I found that the War had not caused much excitement even at its height, and it now appeared as a remote event of little general interest. Although America as a whole was proud of her part—a predominant part it was believed—in winning the War, actually it seemed to have touched her very little.

It would take an entire volume to describe in any detail the extraordinary, unreal atmosphere of Hollywood in those early days, or the amazing difficulties and adventures which all newcomers to the industry, whether on the technical or the artistic side, had to encounter.

The great success of the initial efforts of the local producers had led them to believe, not unnaturally, that they knew what the public wanted, and this apparently praiseworthy effort on the part of "Famous-Players-Lasky" to improve the quality of their productions by invoking the aid of a company of people whose names were well known to the public, was, we all soon discovered, merely a "publicity stunt". No one wanted our advice or assistance, nor did they intend to take it. All they required was the use of our names to act as shields against the critics. Every person connected with the production studios, although few had travelled as far as New York, and many were all but illiterate, was absolutely convinced that he or she knew much better how to depict the manners and customs of whatever society or country they were attempting to show on the screen than any denizen of that country or society, and they were not prepared to amend any detail to meet our criticisms.

When I arrived, spittoons were still being placed in rows down the centre of a set which was supposed to be the Baronial hall of an old English Castle, while an actress taking the part of an early eighteenth-century French marquise was encouraged to wear her hair in the exaggerated "golliwog" style then prevalent in Hollywood.

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The blatantly crude or utterly false psychology of the stories as finally shown upon the screen was on a par with the absurdity of the sets and clothes, but we were powerless to prevent this. All authors, living or dead, famous or obscure, shared the same fate. Their stories were re-written and completely altered either by the stenographers and continuity girls of the scenario department, or by the Assistant Director and his lady-love, or by the leading lady, or by anyone else who happened to pass through the studio ; and even when at last, after infinite struggle, a scene was shot which bore some resemblance to the original story, it was certain to be left out in the cutting-room, or pared away to such an extent that all meaning which it might once have had was lost.

I took a lot of pains to write my first scenario, *The Great Moment*, and its subsequent success proves it to have been reasonably good screen material ; but at first it was treated with the usual contempt, and a continuity writer was turned on to it to do his worst. It was quite an exciting tale, of the *Taming of the Shrew* variety, with a climax in which the girl is bitten by a rattlesnake and only saved because the hero immediately pours a bottle of whisky down her throat, making her very drunk—American film material with a vengeance, I had fondly hoped, and this was ultimately conceded ! Yet the continuity writer felt that it was not exciting enough, and in the effort to increase the “suspense” the whole story was turned into a farce. I was terribly distressed and felt like going back to England at once, and I think that I should have done so if my scenario had not been rescued from utter destruction by Cecil de Mille, who happened to stroll into the studio one day, and overheard the director to whom my film had been allotted say to the group of his subordinates as he wound up a long discussion :

“ Say, boys, I guess you all think you know just what ought to be done, but I certainly can’t think how to end this story myself.”

My eye caught that of Cecil de Mille, and I felt that he

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had seen the joke. Greatly encouraged, I ventured to propose that perhaps the author might be able to help a little by suggesting the end!

Then Cecil de Mille laughed out loud. I have always been grateful to him for that comprehending laugh, for it eased my path very much henceforward, as he was a very influential person in the Lasky studio.

With his powerful influence on my side I was in future accorded wonderfully considerate treatment in comparison with that meted out to the rest. The attitude of contemptuous tolerance at best and of blank negation to every suggestion as the general rule, drove the majority of foreign authors and artists to leave hurriedly after enduring only a few days or weeks of blank despair. All of my compatriots departed after making their first pictures, most of them in a rage, some bitterly disappointed, and some, like Somerset Maugham, with a witty and cynical smile. He did not even remain long enough to watch the production of a single story, but merely handed in his scenario, and moved on to China, where I have no doubt he felt much more at home.

Somehow or other, working first with one studio and then with another, and then back with the first again, I stayed on, paying only short visits to Europe, and I wrote and helped to produce film after film over a period of nearly seven years, *Three Weeks* amongst them. I cared so much to have this one film made as I had visualized it that I paid out of my own pocket to have some scenes which I disliked retaken. It was on the whole well done and made a lot of money.

I scarcely know why I stayed. Certainly not as the result of flattery! I laugh still when I think of the appalling rows that used to go on, and I feel real sympathy for Mr. Sam Wood, the Director of my first two pictures *The Great Moment* and *Beyond the Rocks*, who was obliged to endure quite as much from me, I fear, as I ever did from him, poor man! Something about the work appealed to me, in spite of the

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inevitable sense of frustration and disappointment. I realized that in many ways the Hollywood experts were quite right to despise the established authors if they refused to adapt themselves to the new medium, and to master its intricacies, and who found it impossible to view their material from what came to be known later as the "screen angle". It was impossible to blame the wonderfully enterprising executives of the Production Companies for preferring to produce films which brought in a lot of money, however bad from the point of view of educated people, than to pander to European criticism and produce more artistic pictures which the film public of those days would refuse to go and see. The high-brow attitude of a great number of people who could have helped to improve the demand for good films by supporting the best that did appear, but who preferred for many years to boast that the whole art of moving pictures was beneath their notice, was largely to blame for the terribly poor quality of the films produced in those early days.

I felt a passionate longing to bring reality, if not to the stories—I was powerless there—at least to the settings, the clothes, and the details of the pictures, so that the film public would not be so seriously misled about the manners and customs of people and societies they did not know. I felt that the travesty of "high life" which was presented on the films of those days was calculated to bring into contempt, rather than to encourage, all my romantic ideals, and was likely to prove a perfect example of the unfortunate results which we are warned will occur when the blind attempt to lead the blind.

In those days of the early 'twenties, the menace of Bolshevism, the danger that the whole beautiful culture of our modern world, with its ancient foundations, would be swept away, that the truths and traditions and treasures of our age might be forgotten and neglected and lost in a second and more terrible eclipse of civilization than that which followed upon the fall of Rome, seemed, and I believe was, real and

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personalities, Rudolph Valentino and Gloria Swanson. Both of them were always willing afterwards to acknowledge that I had taught them a great deal about the art of making love before a camera in a way which would carry conviction, and thus produce emotion in everyone who saw the film. John Gilbert, Gary Cooper and Clara Bow were others whose screen personalities I discovered and strove to develop, besides Milton Sills, Conrad Nagel, Lew Cody, Aileen Pringle, Tony Moreno, Pauline Stark and Eleanor Boardman, all of whom played in my pictures at some time or other, and whom I like to think that I helped to perfect, in some cases not only in the studio.

Gloria Swanson, who played the lead in two of my pictures, is a very remarkable actress, extremely intelligent, and filled with strong personal attraction, but troubled as if by a malicious sprite with sudden inclinations to do some ill-advised thing. These impulses overtake her again and again, just as she is about to succeed to the highest degree, whether in her public or private career, and ruin everything for the time. She has such courage and quality that somehow she manages to pull through the mazes of badly-chosen husbands, and unfortunate situations in which she lands herself, and emerges each time still filled with sweetness and charm. With a really good story suiting her exotic type, and directed by one of the many excellent directors now to be found in Hollywood, I believe that she could once more become one of the most magnetic of the stars in the moving picture firmament—if she still wishes to be!

Rudolph Valentino was a really charming young man when I knew him, and kept up all the attractive mannerisms in his ordinary life which delighted his followers on the screen. Although an Italian by birth his life seemed to me to resemble in more ways than one that of a popular Spanish torero, even to the sudden tragic death at the height of his career. He was well cast in *Blood and Sand*.

Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks were already the

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acknowledged King and Queen of the cinema world when I reached Hollywood, and in their beautiful house, "Pickfair", kept up the atmosphere of exclusiveness and remoteness associated with Royalty! Mary at that period had never been to Europe, but was so obviously in a class above all the other moving picture stars on account of her great intelligence and natural refinement, that no one thought of questioning her supremacy. Douglas Fairbanks was raised to the same level for the time by his great love for her. Even at meals he used to insist upon sitting by her side, and no more tragic example can exist of the reality of the curse which hangs over the whole life of these apparently Paradise-like cities of the West Coast of America than the breakdown of this seemingly perfect romance. In those days the atmosphere of "Pickfair" was one of peace and beauty, and I found great rest and solace there.

The evenings when Charlie Chaplin came to dine were particularly interesting, for his points of view upon all subjects were original and witty, and the sheer genius which has made him tower above all other film actors, and become, I have no doubt at all, an historical figure, is easily recognizable in his private life.

From the first moment we met, Charlie and I were always the greatest friends. I remember one particular party at his own house which impressed me immensely. We used to play games often, generally dumb-crambo and charades, and on this occasion we drew lots, in pairs, to act scenes representing different emotions. Charlie drew me as his partner, and from the bowl I picked our subject, which was "Hate". Our turn was last and as all the rest had treated their themes in a comic vein, Charlie decided that we would be serious. By some magic he got himself up into an alcove behind which the supports of the window appeared like a cross. He wore nothing but a cloth twisted round him and spread out his hands as if crucified. I knelt, draped in a white sheet, at the foot of the alcove, to represent the Mourning World, while

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Charlie's Japanese servant lit up the whole scene with a single candle, held low from the side where he could not be seen. The room was otherwise in darkness, and the effect was extraordinarily moving. I remember the sudden, reverent hush, as the audience first saw his face, so wonderfully filled with agony and resignation.

I remember Charlie in many extremely comic situations too; the funniest of all, I believe, arose out of a contretemps caused by a storm which washed away the road we were supposed to have travelled over and forced us to spend the night at a fearfully rough halting-place in Mexico.

We were the guests of Mr. W. R. Hearst, always the kindest and most perfect of hosts, and the party consisted of about twenty gay young people, chaperoned by Charlie and his wife, Lita Grey, whom he had just married, and myself. The only accommodation was a bar-room with a counter and a few chairs about, surrounded by six little shacks like hen houses each with two rough and very dirty camp-beds and a washstand in them, except one, which boasted a double bed with a child's cot beside it.

The girls of the party packed into the shacks in pairs, and the young men rolled up in rugs in the cars, and on the bar-room floor, but Charlie and Lita and I, who were travelling in the same car, got there a little after the others, and found nothing left for us but the double-bedded shack.

It was decided that Charlie and Lita should share the bed, and that I should occupy the cot, with my feet sticking out at the end, supported on a box full of broken crockery. It was 2 a.m. and we were all very tired and bad-tempered. Charlie took off his coat and boots and Lita removed her hat, but I was afraid to dispense with any form of protection, and kept on even my gloves and shoes, for I caught sight of a well-remembered insect on the wall!

Lita and Charlie kept bickering and squabbling and accusing each other of taking up too much room, and I thought I should never get to sleep and began to feel very



Charlie Chaplin and Elinor Glyn after the night in Mexico

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peevish too. After about an hour, Charlie suddenly sat up, and said in a sepulchral voice, "My God! Think of Charlie Chaplin and Elinor Glyn in bed together in the wilds of Mexico!" Lita and I burst into hysterical laughter, and this audience set him off. He invented imaginary paragraphs in the Press, describing the shocking affair, and acted the parts of all kinds of people supposedly reading them, showing their different reactions to the news. Never in his most amusing picture has he been more brilliantly humorous than during that absurd night. I laughed until I felt quite faint. Towards morning we agreed to get some sleep, but after a little interval of quiet, the sepulchral voice began again:

"My God! There is a bug!"

This was the beginning of the second Act of *The Mexican Scandal*, and this time we laughed so loudly that the rest of the party rushed in, thinking that we had been attacked by bandits!

What a gift, to be able to bring such riotous laughter to mankind!

Here is a photograph of Charlie and me as we looked the next morning, with our host, Mr. W. R. Hearst, in the distance.

After Marion Davies arrived from the East and built her beautiful house by the sea the parties became really wonderful, and everyone seemed to be gay and intelligent. She and Charlie used to entertain us all with delicious impromptu scenes which convulsed everyone with laughter, and the one-minute speeches on the most difficult subjects, announced by Charlie, were most amusing and often really brilliant. The idea that all the "Movie" actors and actresses are stupid and have only looks is quite erroneous. It takes brains and courage to achieve fame on the screen.

When, later, the unfortunate effects of Prohibition began to reach serious proportions, there were some cases of terrible debacles, through the evil effects of "moonshine" alcohol, and the whole level of intelligence among the rank and file

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deteriorated. Numbers of the stars and even the technical men had bouts of drinking, too, and I remember more than one occasion when the shooting of pictures—my own story *Man and Maid* was one of them—had to be held up for more than a day while some important member of the cast slept off the results of complete intoxication. This behaviour drew mild censure from the studio management on account of the money lost by such delay, but it seemed to arouse positive sympathy if not envy in most of the lesser people!

On the other hand, although drink was certainly terrible at this period, I am convinced that the celebrated “orgie” parties for which Hollywood was famed even before 1920 were quite mythical. Certainly none of the stars whose names are known in Europe ever took part in them. The morals of Hollywood were peculiar, but amorous public exhibitions were too much part of their daily work to seem attractive out of studio hours. Generally speaking, the private lives of screen “vamps” and “houris” and male “villains” were probably more respectable than those of the rest, but the whole atmosphere was undoubtedly hectic and abnormal. Some wonderful characters such as Lewis Stone and Irene Rich seem to have been able to achieve a normal, peaceful private life in spite of continuous contact with the studios during many years, but they are few and far between.

I was told by a well-known clairvoyante in California that the whole of the West Coast of America was suffering from the curse bequeathed to it by the old continent of Lemuria, which is supposed to have existed in the Pacific and to have disappeared in volcanic disturbance in prehistoric times. This continent, she told me, was the real site of the Garden of Eden, and its destruction was the work of the Angel with the Flaming Sword, as described in the Bible (Genesis, chapter iii). According to her the next civilization which arose was the Atlantean, which developed on the continent of Atlantis (lying between Europe and America), and is that referred to in chapters v. and vi. of the Book of

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Genesis, where we are told that "giants inhabited the Earth" (chapter vi., verse 4), and "mighty men . . . men of renown" sprang from the union of "the sons of God with the daughters of men". The wickedness of the Atlanteans led to their destruction in the Flood, when the continent of Atlantis was submerged and the waters broke through the Straits of Gibraltar and flooded the Mediterranean Basin, just as the wickedness of the Lemurians had led to their destruction by volcanic eruptions long ages before. A disturbed atmosphere was the result of these upheavals of nature, affecting both the Atlantic coast-lines. This is reflected in the Legend of Fingal's Cave and the Irish mythologies.

It seems hard that the poor West Coast of America should be cursed by the even more ancient sin of Lemuria, but I came to believe that there must be some deep truth in the story because of the terrible things which always seem to happen in California.

I cannot say how much I admire all those who are able to live in this land of enchantment and yet avoid falling under the "Lemurian Curse of the West Coast", for I confess that I did not entirely succeed in doing so. The curse is nothing less than that of the Evil Fairy in the old stories, who was able to banish the real personality of those whom she bewitched, forcing them against their wills to carry out her commands, to forget the land of their birth, the purpose of their journey, and many of the principles which they had hitherto held most dear.

The early symptoms of the disease, which break out almost on arrival in Hollywood, are a sense of exaggerated self-importance and self-centredness, which naturally alienates all old friends. Next comes a great desire for and belief in the importance of money above all else, a loss of the normal sense of humour and of proportion, and finally, in extreme cases, the abandonment of all previous standards of moral value. My natural character would I trust have saved me from reaching this final stage, but after I left it was some

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time before I could shake off the effects of the insidious poison of the atmosphere of Hollywood. I can only compare it to the result of cocaine or some other terrible drug which shatters the moral fibre of its addicts. I shudder still when I look at the diaries which I kept when in California, for many of my ideals grew dimmed, and my sense of values was entirely altered. I became completely self-centred, callous even, to a degree which seems almost incredible to me now. Strangest of all was the tremendous importance which I attached to money! I had never been a lover of riches when I lived in Europe—indeed I think I was unusually free from this common fault. But the desire to make more and more money undoubtedly became the chief aim of my existence after a year or two in Hollywood, and although I quieted my conscience with the thought that after I had made it I would use it to help humanity, this ultimate object became more and more remote and was never put into a concrete shape.

When I returned to Europe on brief visits and met old friends who did not share these views I thought of them as “back numbers” who must be humoured for the sake of old times, and pitied because they did not share in my glorious new world, in which everyone was rich, and no one was burdened with the old-fashioned ideas which brought poverty and ill-health and ill-luck in their train.

The truth was that I had fallen under the spell of the old “New Thought” ideas of my first American trip once more, and was unconsciously in the grip of those terrible black forces which bring easy wealth, success, notoriety, even perpetual youth, but which demand in exchange all the qualities of the soul. But this time I had eaten the goblin fruit, and had lost my sense of danger. I even imagined myself to be making great strides in spiritual development!

On looking back at it all I am staggered by my calm acceptance of many terrible happenings, and my failure to appreciate or fear the dangers of the sinister atmosphere. Nothing seemed strange or ominous or reprehensible to me

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any more. Queer murders, terrifying hold-ups, daring robberies, unexplained crimes of all sorts occurred continuously, but I never bothered about them. The Chief Constable of Los Angeles told me that the crime there was far worse than anyone knew, and that many more murders took place in Los Angeles and Hollywood in a month than in the whole of France in a year. He himself went mad not long afterwards, poor man, so perhaps this was not true! But it certainly seemed to be the case.

Almost all the people I knew had been held up and robbed at some time or another, and the leading stars had to be accompanied by armed guards on all occasions, and their houses were patrolled at night by three or four hired gunmen. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford always sent a car to follow my car back to my hotel after dining at Pickfair, if no other guests were going my way, and Mrs. Pickford (Mary's mother), who often drove back with me, advised me always to put my rings and pearl necklace in my stockings before starting.

Charlie Chaplin, Marion Davies and myself all came upon a murderer in the act of killing a man outside the door of my suite on the Sixth Floor of the Ambassador Hotel one evening. Before we could realize what was happening the lift appeared behind them filled with police, and the living and the dead man were quickly taken away. The next day no one in the hotel knew anything about the occurrence. "What nonsense," the Manager said when I asked him about it. There was nothing in the papers, and we were none of us ever summoned as witnesses. Only the slight stain on the carpet by my door, where the blood had dripped from the murdered man, and which showed in spite of careful washing, remained to remind me that it was not all a dream. Eventually I heard the truth about this particular tragedy from a private source, and learnt that the murderer had been set at liberty. On two other nights when I heard shots and cries in the garden under my balcony I could find out nothing about

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them next day, and I have no doubt that numbers of terrible crimes were hushed up in this manner. I myself received anonymous letters, and uncanny telephone messages during the night for some weeks in 1924, all threatening to assassinate me. On the advice of my son-in-law, Sir Rhys Williams, who with my daughter, Juliet, came out to stay with me that year, I handed the letters to the hotel detective, with a promise of ample reward if he could put a stop to them. Within a few days he claimed to have traced them to an escaped madman, who had now been recaptured—no doubt as good a story as any other! I paid the reward, not feeling myself in a position to do battle with the murder racket gangs which evidently existed, and so the threats ceased.

I am told that all this has been cleaned up to-day, and that murder and drink are both quite old fashioned in Hollywood, since the whole community has moved forward many steps along the path of civilization and culture. When I look at the really wonderful quality of some of the films now being produced, I can well believe this. Adversity seems to have given America a new soul, as it has twice saved mine, and even the terrible Lemurian Curse of the West Coast may have been lifted at last. How I pray that this may be true, for in spite of all the difficulties and adversities and dangers which I encountered in Hollywood I remember always with gratitude the kindness and constant support of many real friends whom I have left behind in California.

CHAPTER XXVIII

*More Wanderings in Europe (Germany,  
Scandinavia and Hungary)*

IN March of 1923, during one of my annual visits to Europe, I received an invitation from the Anglo-Swedish Literary Society to give a series of lectures in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The lectures were to be on all sorts of subjects, such as the education and emancipation of women, marriage customs, and so on, and were to be in English, in itself a tribute, I thought, to the high level of education of the members. My first contract to produce two pictures with the Lasky Company had just ended, and I had agreed to begin work on the production of *Three Weeks* for the Goldwyn Company in May, but as I was not due to return to Hollywood for a month, I was glad to accept the offer of these kind people, for I had always wanted to visit Scandinavia.

On my way to Gothenburg, where my first lecture was to be given, I stayed a few days in Berlin, where I had not been since the War.

Except Prince Henry of Prussia, I have never known a German man or woman whom I have liked, and the brutal manners and spirit of intolerant superiority which I encountered in the authorities at Dresden when my daughter was ill there in 1908 are indelibly impressed on my mind. Still more am I unable to forget the fully-attested stories of bestial cruelty perpetrated by German troops which were recounted to me by the mayors and the people of the devastated regions

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in France, and the memory of those poor mutilated fruit trees round Noyon is ineffaceable.

Men who can behave like this seem scarcely human, but during this visit to Berlin I was filled wth genuine sympathy for the people of Germany, just then enduring the extremity of suffering which resulted from the total devaluation of the mark in that year. There was not a trace of the old arrogance in the faces which I saw in the streets, and all looked poor and hungry. The big houses were shut, and only the business men and actual workmen seemed to have any means of livelihood. Those with fixed incomes and salaries, the professors, doctors, lawyers, and pensioners of pre-War days, in fact all the upper and middle classes, were literally starving. I saw poor old ladies picking up stray bits of wood in the Tier Garten, clad in worn fragments of what had once been decent clothes, and the few children visible looked pinched and consumptive. The tears came to my eyes as I watched a pitiful old professor, obviously a man of culture and refinement, huddled on a bench in thin, shabby clothes, exhausted with hunger and cold, and I was overcome with pity for these disciplined, courageous people, capable of enduring thus in proud silence the extreme poverty and suffering which was, I imagined, the aftermath of defeat. I felt as all other English people felt who visited Germany at that time, that all this suffering should be prevented, and I spoke and wrote in favour of the cancellation of war indemnities and almost quarrelled with my French friends when I returned to Paris after my trip, and found them as unrelenting as ever on this subject and as implacable in their detestation of their old foes. I could not believe their version of the situation.

The French believed that the devaluation of the mark was part of a cunning and elaborate scheme to accelerate the return of military power in Germany, and the consequent denunciation of the Versailles Treaty. The misery and suffering which such a step must inevitably cause to their own people, far from displeasing the authors of the scheme,

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they assured me, was deliberately planned to achieve a four-fold purpose ; firstly, to mislead the world into the belief that Germany was really in desperate straits, and thus to hasten the cancellation of Reparation payments, and to alienate the sympathy of America and England from the French point of view ; secondly, to exasperate the German people and to dissatisfy them with the republican system of government, so that a subsequent coup by the militarist party would find general support ; thirdly, to impress upon them the idea that these intolerable conditions were the natural consequences of defeat, and of the cruel and greedy exactions of the Allies (instead of being, in fact, the result of the deliberate policy of their financial leaders), and so to inculcate a spirit of revenge, and an idea that a war of liberation would be preferable to the continued endurance of such abominable tyranny. Lastly, by this means the enormous internal debt which represented the cost of the War, could be cancelled through the apparently forced devaluation of the mark, and the odium for the resulting hardship could thus be thrown upon the Allies, whereas straightforward repudiation would have caused bitter resentment against those at home responsible for perpetrating such barefaced robbery of the savings of their own people.

By this means, I was told, Germany would shortly attain to a far stronger position than any of the Allies, for she would be free of the burden of debt which they would still be shouldering and would undoubtedly use her new-found strength to re-arm, in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, which she would then proceed to tear up, if necessary by force.

“ Do not be deceived by the old trick of shamming dead,” said my old French friend, who could remember Sedan. “ Nothing will satisfy them but another war, in which they hope to avoid the mistakes which brought them defeat in the last. The one object of their policy for the next few years, until they have prepared themselves once more, will be to

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divide England and France, so that they may not have to fight us both at once another time. To attain this end they will fawn upon the English now, and fill the streets of Berlin with genuinely starving professors in order to deceive such observers as yourself. The lives of many young men may thus, they believe, be saved in a few years' time, by the sacrifice of a few old people to-day. It is a clever move, and only Germans could have thought of it. But do not be deceived. The Germans are always the same ; they desire to defeat France because they think that it is their turn to do so, and they wish to have the last word in the long argument between the two countries ; but they do not hate the French. They hate the English because they believe that English intervention robbed them of their victory in 1914, and because they are jealous of the British Empire. For this reason they desire to humiliate the English more than they wish anything else in the world. Listen to what I tell you now, for you will live to see my words come true. I shall be dead, and so for me it does not matter."

Of course I did not believe this prophecy at the time, and imagined that the vision of my old friend had been coloured by the bitter experiences of his youth. Perhaps this was indeed the case, but—perhaps not ! Time will show. Much that he foretold, including his own death, has come about already.

I have two grandsons who will be old enough to fight in five years' time. Is it possible that we must face it all again ?

I was glad to leave Berlin and to move on to Sweden, where none of the ill-effects of the War would exist to depress my spirits.

The sleeping-car in which I travelled with my maid—I had never travelled alone since my unpleasant adventure in Poland—broke down in the middle of the night, and we had to turn out of our comfortable berths and continue the journey in a stuffy third-class coach already full up with Swedish women of the peasant type. I was much interested by

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them, but was not sorry to be removed once more into a sleeping-car, for even this short period in the hard carriage had tired me a good deal, and I was very glad when we arrived in Gothenburg.

The women in the train looked over-worked, I thought, and all their natural beauty and freshness was gone through lack of rest and care. They possessed the air of patient resignation which is the mark of the working peasant woman all over the world, and which reminds one of Millet's famous picture of the labourer who carries the world on his back. There is a beauty in the ugliness of such women which is lacking in the lovely, doll-like faces of the Hollywood crowds, but it is a beauty that hurts. I was filled with a desire to rest those tired arms, and to smooth away the wrinkles from those anxious foreheads, and I felt like a deserter when at last I was haled off to the comfortable sleeping-car, leaving the poor things to complete their long journey sitting bolt upright in the jolting compartment.

I was struck by the clean streets, and new, spruce appearance of this city, in spite of its cold grey sky and grim Northern light.

The type of the people in the streets was more English than any other nation that I have ever seen, but the expression on the faces was quite different, and a foreign impression was given by the snow boots, and the astrakhan caps worn by many of the men.

The British Consul-General and his wife, a Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin, called at my hotel to welcome me, a charming touch of kindness which I appreciated very much, although I scarcely needed to be supported by my own countrymen in this case, as nothing could have been more kind and hospitable than the Committee of the Society, who turned out to be even more charming and highly educated and friendly than I had anticipated, and who encouraged and surprised me by appearing to know and really appreciate most of my books. *Three Weeks* had been taken seriously here, I found,

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and I was duly grateful. It seemed particularly quaint to me to realize that these calm-looking people, whose faces bore less trace of passions and emotions than those of any race which I had ever seen, should be the ones to show the greatest measure of appreciation of my romantic and supposedly very passionate books! Clearly their set expressions and complete lack of animation could be no indication of their real feelings. I felt the truth of Grandmamma's teachings about the importance of not judging people hastily or by their external appearance, and the longer I live the more certain I am that she was wise. The faces did not appear soulless, and all looked and were highly educated, but to the eye of a stranger they seemed to be all alike, in the same way as the trees in an avenue of chestnut or beech are indistinguishable. Each tree, no doubt, differs considerably from the rest, but the resemblances are much more noticeable than the distinctions and the impression is one of complete similarity.

I gave a lecture on "Woman's Place in Modern Civilization", and it seemed to go well, although it was rather an ordeal to me. Many beautifully expressed speeches in perfect English followed mine, and altogether I think that the greatest compliments which I have ever received from literary people were paid to me during this trip. I felt deeply grateful and much moved.

I delivered another lecture the next day, on "Discipline" this time, and I also enjoyed several parties in the houses of these dignified and charming people before leaving for Stockholm.

I was interested to contrast what I saw of Scandinavian society with what I knew of Russia and Spain. The women during this trip were plain-featured, and had bad complexions, as in Russia, no doubt on account of the climate, and the men seemed rather solid and without physical charm, although intelligent and educated and completely civilized. The women lacked the curious rather unbalanced attraction of the Russians, and the vivacity and perfect clothes of the

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Spanish ladies, but there was something fine and brave about them, and they gave an impression of peace and happiness achieved after deep thought, and not precariously held as a result of a refusal to face unpleasant realities. The cold air no doubt demands rich food, and large quantities of everything seemed to be consumed. This habit showed in the figures of both sexes on reaching middle age. I gained the impression that over-eating and not drink was the prevailing vice, if vice could be said to exist amongst such kindly, honest, serious people.

The tour continued on much the same lines in Stockholm and Christiania and in Denmark. In these places I was invited to balls as well as parties and enjoyed the life immensely. There is none of the wildness of Russia to bring an ominous feeling into every gathering, and none of the sense of limitation which inevitably arises in Spain, on account of the strict control over subjects discussed which has to be exercised at all times to avoid offending religious susceptibilities. The advantages of Protestantism are made very clear in these free, self-respecting Northern democracies, in which there is a sense of deep spirituality behind the rather uninteresting exterior. The melancholy of all those inhabiting Northern climates is evident, but is not obtrusive, as in Russia, but rather kept under and controlled. The standard of comfort and refinement is high, especially in Sweden, and the fine houses are homes as in England, and not "Hôtels" as in France, or "Palaces" as in Russia and Spain.

I had a particularly delightful time in Denmark, because the British Minister and his wife, Lord and Lady Granville, were old friends of mine, and were more than kind. They invited me to a series of pleasant parties, and told me a great deal about the country. Lord Granville also arranged for me to have the honour of an audience with the King, who told me several amusing tales, especially about his visits to the Eskimos. Their houses, he said, were cone shaped and made of snow, just like the illustrations in children's geography

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books, and had little low doors through which he could scarcely pass his great form. "I felt sure that my legs would have to stay in the street while my body was inside, and that they would take me for a Sea-serpent!" he said, with such a merry smile. He told me that he had summoned me in audience because Her Majesty the Queen was so fond of my books and wished to meet me. Unfortunately she was laid up with influenza, so I did not have this pleasure.

Decidedly, if I wanted appreciation and kindness from intelligent literary people I should have gone to live in Sweden or Denmark instead of London when my contracts in America ended in 1929, and I found myself free at last to give up the hard labour of the studios, and to retire into private life; for it seems that I should have had a warmer welcome there than in my own country. But East or West, Home is best, and on the whole I think that I prefer the cold wind of newspaper criticism to the icy blasts of nature which are the lot of these gallant Northern people!

## *Hungary, 1931*

In this chapter of European wanderings, I would like also to record some of my impressions of Hungary, which I visited in 1931 at the kind invitation of Baron and Baroness Rubido-Zichy, the then Hungarian Minister in London, with whom I stayed, and who spared no pains to show me as much as possible of their charming country during the two months of my stay. I wrote about the Hungary of 1931 in my book *Love's Hour*.

The dominating impression which I carried away from Hungary is a curious one. It appeared to me to be pre-eminently the land of the horse, and the advent of the car has apparently made little or no difference to the importance of this noble animal in the life of the country. Racing, hunting, polo, even the all-but-forgotten art of driving, fills all classes with delight, and the horse is still supreme in agriculture.

## *More Wanderings in Europe*

Never have I seen such perfect animals, nor such evident sympathy between man and beast, as is shown by the Hungarian riders. In Budapest there is a beautiful memorial to Arpad, the great national hero of Hungary, showing him in the midst of a group of his mounted chiefs. The men are fierce and purposeful, but the horses are quiet and contented-looking, a subtle recognition by the artist of this wonderful relationship which exists in Hungary between man and horse.

Even the feet of the men proclaim their age-long horsemanship, for they are small and pointed and nimble, and give the impression that activity in the stirrup and not weight-bearing is their normal occupation. I cannot imagine the Hungarians whom I saw in the role of foot-soldiers, tramping along in enormous flat-soled boots ; the idea is quite incongruous. Fighters of the first quality their history proves them to be—but not on their feet.

I am sure that Europe is not sufficiently grateful to the Hungarians for having kept the gate of Southern Europe closed against the Turkish invaders for so many hundred years. It is a bitter thought that the great name of Hunyadi Janos should conjure up in the average person's mind rather the idea of a bottle of table water than that of one of the greatest men and most gallant of the defenders of Western civilization. Perhaps this is due to the hopeless difficulty of the Hungarian language. To make history, you must have four things : a hero whose glorious deeds deserve to be told, a poet to sing of them, a widespread language in which to make them known, and an audience with a heart and mind in tune to listen. In Hungary there has been no lack of the heroes and the deeds—and from all I hear, no lack of poets ; but unfortunately the audience is strictly limited to the people of the country itself, because no one else can understand the language at all. Thus no “Song of Roland” exists to tell the world of the exploits of Hunyadi, and no Iliad is handed down about the daring deeds of Arpad.

The social customs and general outlook of the upper

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classes in Hungary seemed to be very similar to those which prevailed in England in the nineteenth century, before the advent of any modern socialistic notions.

The happy feudal relationship between landlord and peasant which exists still in Hungary is like that which used to prevail amongst the country squires and people of the English countryside, and the general atmosphere of mutual respect and of community of interests is the same. The Hungarian nobles have never ill-treated their peasants, and there is no sign of the wild, uncivilized strain in them which is so evident in the Russians.

"In Hungary we have attained to a much higher level of civilization than in Russia," an old General told me, "and we are a much happier people. There has never been any class antagonism, and in general the peasant owns his own land, and only works for his lord when he has gathered his own harvest. He is as proud and independent as he can be, and has never had to cringe beneath the whip of an overseer. We are all Hungarians, some richer perhaps, and some poorer, but all united by our Nationality and by the constant need to defend our land against the foreign invader. We have our own standards in many things, and they are quite different from those of our neighbours. No Hungarian peasant would permit his wife to go out and work for anyone else, for instance, as the women do in Austria. If he allows her to labour in the fields at harvest-time it is because there is real need for everyone to help with the general task, but he would never let her work for hire; he would think this a reflection on himself."

I had already realized, by observing the friendly, considerate manner in which my Hungarian hosts treated their servants, that a great difference must exist between their outlook towards them, and that of, say, the Russians or Austrians.

The Hungarians are essentially a free-spirited people, and in this respect seem to come nearer to the English and French and Scandinavians than to many of their neighbours. They

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are nearer to the Spaniards than to the French in some ways, however, particularly in their generous disregard for financial advantage, and they show no trace of the French materialistic philosophy, although they are practical and full of common sense.

It may be a far-fetched idea, but I cannot help wondering if the similarity of ideas and outlook which struck me as existing between the Hungarians and the English has something to do with this noticeable love of horses which is found in both countries. The friendly feudal spirit seems to be kept alive by equine interests, but there is something deeper than this behind it all. Perhaps our old Danish horse-worshipping ancestors possessed some secret wisdom which they carved into our White Horse Hills, and which the Hungarians also possess. There are more things in Heaven and Earth than we many of us dream. Although I fear the creatures myself, and have a horror of stables and even of colts in the fields, I can well believe that man receives more benefit from his contact with the horse than we any of us imagine.

The ladies in the Hungarian society whom I was privileged to meet had something of the Russian charm and extreme naturalness, but none of the Russian melancholy. Gaiety seemed to be natural to them, and was not a forced product, akin to intoxication, as in Russia. The society which I saw was completely exclusive still, and there were no *nouveaux riches*. In spite of the great poverty which had fallen upon the country as a result of the harsh terms of the Peace Treaty, it was still impossible to buy a place in this society, as is now customary everywhere else. The only means of entry to it other than birth seemed to be the possession of exceptional brains and charm, and a wide knowledge of other European countries and affairs. Even so, courtesy would never give place to familiar intimacy, and there would be no intermarriage.

There seemed to be a distinction drawn between this society and the typical Hungarian society which is often

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presented in books. That which I saw consisted of those old noble families who had in the past, if not at present, owned large estates, and had thus been rich enough to travel in the countries of Europe, and mix with their kind in Paris, at Cannes or in London, and who therefore knew the world. There was another equally proud circle consisting of the landed gentry, some of whose names were famous in the history of their country, and many of whom had been ennobled long before the families in the cosmopolitan set, but who, owing to the smaller size of their estates, could not afford to travel abroad, and whose outlook was therefore bounded by the borders of Hungary. I met only a few of this type, and found them charming, although in a totally different way from my other friends. They were proud, courteous gentlepeople, but having no cosmopolitan experiences to share with me, they found it difficult to maintain any conversation for long, although English seemed to be spoken by all.

How necessary is travel for human development ! The distinction between these two equally well-bred, well-educated types of Hungarian families brought this point home to me afresh, and I rejoiced that I had at any rate been able to provide many months' of foreign travel as part of the children's education. It is not possible to appreciate the fine points of international diplomacy or economic policy without having seen something of the conditions of life and learnt a little about the general outlook of other nations.

It may be asked, why should ordinary people require to appreciate fine points of international diplomacy, and be expected to know so much about the affairs of their neighbours ? Is it not of greater importance to their country that they should concentrate upon minding their own business, and should acquaint themselves rather with the details of the matters over which they have control than with those outside their immediate purview ?

Those who argue thus are already on the road to the

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adoption of the ideals of Fascism, or National Socialism, or for that matter of Bolshevism—in short, they unconsciously favour an abandonment of the principles of democracy, of liberty, equality, fraternity, in the interests of greater national cohesion, discipline and efficiency. They are secretly anxious to stifle the freedom of speech and of the pen, and to quench all adverse criticism by discouraging freedom of thought.

Such ideas are incompatible with the continuation of a democratic constitution and the ideal of individual liberty of conscience and action for which England stands. "For liberty sanctioned by law" was my husband's family motto, and it is the basic principle of Christian civilization. There are only two things to be done with ill-informed criticism and unwise political activity. The first is to stifle it by force, and to disfranchise, by one means or another, those who hold these, for the sake of argument, admittedly ill-judged opinions. This is the old, old path which leads directly to tyranny, war, and ultimate decay of the civilization concerned, as written history has shown so clearly and archaeology has proved beyond a doubt.

The second way is to transform the whole body of voters in the country from ill-informed into well-informed people, and since they are each one of them to influence, through the ballot-box, the whole course not only of their own, but of human history, their education needs to be wide enough to include some understanding of the people, the needs and the hopes of other countries besides their own.

With the aid of the wireless, the films, the cheap lending-libraries and the press, a great deal is being done in the direction of accomplishing this stupendous object, which, however slow of attainment and fraught with danger it may seem, is the most hopeful—indeed the only path for mankind to pursue. The glorious adventure of universal education may, I believe, prove to be the means of deliverance for our civilization from the law of universal decay ; but it must be education, and not a mere smattering of ill-digested knowledge, or

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a narrow intimacy with specialized subjects, if it is to achieve its purpose, and we are, alas ! a long way from that ideal as yet.

I only trust that present nationalistic tendencies and currency difficulties may not put any check upon the number of tourists who set out each year to enjoy new experiences abroad, or spoil the useful activities of the travel agencies who are making it possible for so many to obtain some conception of other countries besides their own.

## CHAPTER XXIX

*More about Films*

FTER my Danish trip I returned to Hollywood to assist with the production of *Three Weeks* for Goldwyn, and afterwards I signed a contract with the amalgamated Metro-Goldwyn Company to produce several of my books, including *His Hour*, the Russian story. It was directed by King Vidor, a most sympathetic personality, and John Gilbert played the part of Gritzko. I thoroughly enjoyed the making of this film. There were plenty of Russian refugees in Hollywood by then, and the parts were many of them played by these exiles, some of whom I had known when I was in St. Petersburg. I think that every detail was correct, for Vladimir Lazareff, Princess Yousoupoff's nephew, who had been one of the Emperor's pages in 1910, helped me to supervise the whole thing.

That very touching film, *The Last Command*, which was acted so wonderfully by Emil Jannings some years later, showed how a great Russian General, emigrated to Hollywood after the revolution and earning his living as an "extra", was given the very rôle to play which he had occupied in life. Such a story could easily be true, as I discovered when casting the parts for *His Hour*.

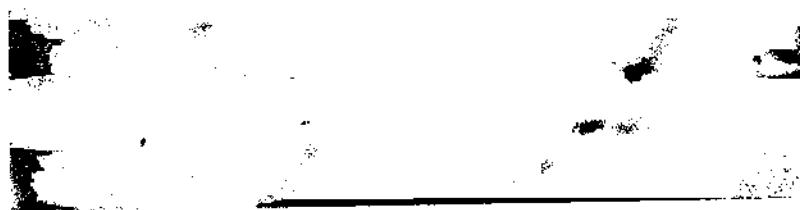
After two years at the Metro-Goldwyn Studios I returned to work with my first Company, "Famous-Players-Lasky", by now renamed Paramount, and made two very successful films for them, both with Clara Bow as the heroine. She was a wonderful little actress, and had a most remarkable personality and great talent. She was filled with emotion

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and very easy to direct. I had published a story called *It* in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, in which the hero possessed this elusive quality, but the Paramount organization wanted a scenario in which the girl was the attractive character, not the man. I tried to change the rôles, but could not think how to do it until I met Clara Bow ; as soon as I saw her, however, I felt quite inspired, and the result was a decided "Box Office" success and grossed over a million dollars. This made me feel terribly rich and successful, particularly as *It* was followed by another film the next year, *Red Hair*, which was almost as great a hit.

Clara Bow's courage was tremendous, and was remarkable even amongst the Hollywood "stars", all of whom were noted for their pluck and willingness to undertake the most dangerous exploits, if the part they were acting demanded it. I remember being told by Cecil de Mille how Gloria Swanson, on one occasion, had to lie face downwards while a lion, supposedly tame, planted its foot on her bare back, and instructed by the trainer, pretended to begin to make a meal of her. The lion seems to have thought the idea a pleasant one, for the very next day he killed and started to eat his keeper! Gloria never turned a hair over the danger, however, though she complained bitterly of the unpleasant smell of the lion's fur !

I was given a great demonstration of the fine courage of the whole company of actors and camera men engaged in the production of *It*, and of Clara Bow in particular, for the story demanded a shipwreck scene, and we all embarked upon a most unseaworthy old yacht and set sail into the blue of the Pacific Ocean. On what was judged to be a suitably rough day, the shipwreck was staged, and Clara, who was an indifferent swimmer, fell gracefully overboard into the shark-infested waves at the bidding of the Director, while Tony Moreno, who was playing the hero, gallantly jumped in after her in accordance with the directions in the script, and without the slightest hesitation. Fortunately he succeeded



Clara Bow



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in rescuing her before she sank for good! All the rest of the company had to rush to the side in order to heel over the old boat so as to make it appear to be capsizing, which it very nearly did. But no one made the slightest protest at the gravity of the danger or showed any fear. Such risks were felt to be all in the day's work.

I take off my hat to the wonderful courage and cheerful willingness of the Hollywood "extras". No one who does not know intimately how the effects which delight the eyes of the world when they appear upon the screen are in fact produced, can have any idea of the degree of self-control and fortitude demanded from the actors and actresses who do not receive the limelight, but who contribute so much to the success of the picture.

Clara Bow's career was ruined by the introduction of talking pictures, for her pronunciation was not very good. I believe she might have learnt to speak "Hollywood" English well enough, and that in time she would have become one of the greatest artists on the screen, particularly in tragic parts, for which she had a far greater aptitude than for the comedy scenes which I had to make her act in my films, but ill luck seemed to pursue the poor little thing after I left Hollywood, and she now has retired altogether, into a happy married life I am glad to think. I am not so sure that her lot is not one which might well be envied by some of the never-married or over-married stars whom she has left behind to carry on the film actress' eternal and inevitably unsuccessful war against *anno domini*. Here is her photograph which she gave me when she visited England on her honeymoon.

After the Paramount contract ended in 1927, I decided to make no more films, and I left Hollywood and lived in New York, writing daily articles and occasional magazine stories. I had a most exciting flat on the very top of the Ritz Tower, then the highest inhabited building in the world, but now a mere pygmy I am told. The flat occupied the whole floor

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of this remarkable edifice, which was not many feet square at that height, and the views from there, in all directions, were quite extraordinary. A thunderstorm seen from this altitude became a thrilling experience, for it seemed as if the thunder and lightning were all around you, and a high wind made the whole tower rock. There was something weird and unearthly about the view, with the queer lights and shadows by day and the myriad lamps of the city twinkling at night, as if the stars above were reflected in the depths of some mighty lake.

In 1928 the production of one of my stories, originally called *Not Always*, but renamed *Such Men are Dangerous*, by the Fox Film Company, who bought the film rights, was begun. It was the first of my scenarios to be produced as a "talkie" and was, I thought, extraordinarily well done. I had no part in this production after the preliminary stage, but would not have wished it to be different in any way. American film producers had learnt all that I had to teach them, and I realized that my work was done.

I went to stay in Hollywood with Marion Davies, who is the most perfect hostess in the world, at her delightful "Beach House". She kept me there for six weeks of delicious idleness such as I had not enjoyed for many years. I discovered the charm and beauty which strangers find in Hollywood and I basked in the enchanting sunshine and grew young again in body and mind. I felt that I had found freedom at last and could enjoy myself how I pleased, for my responsibilities were at an end and my financial torments a thing of the past—or so I, in common with the whole American nation, and most of the rest of the world, believed, in that prosperous year before the Slump!

My mother was settled in a pleasant flat on Chelsea Embankment, and the children were both happily married, so I decided to go and live in Washington, a place which had always appealed to me, and where I had many friends. I was so delighted with it, and with the cosmopolitan culture

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and repose of the society there that I bought a very nice old house of the 1790 period in Georgetown and amused myself in decorating it. My long years of practice in designing lavish interiors for films had not taught me to be modest in my ideas or simple in my tastes, and I am afraid that I spent a good deal of money on it! Decorating houses has always been a rage with me, and is, alas! a most extravagant hobby.

Before moving into the house I thought I would return to England to see my family for a few weeks. That is six years ago, and I have never returned! There is no place like home, after all, and the friendliness of dear old London, and the joy of seeing my children, and grandchildren, and old friends once more, took away all desire to return to America. My mother had also become so frail that I did not want to live so far away from her in future.

So it was that bristling with dollars and self-confidence, I returned to live in my native land, blissfully unaware of the unpleasant experiences which the Angel with the Flaming Sword had in store for me during the next few years; and not only for me, but also for the greater part of mankind. For this was May 1929 and the slump was just beginning to break upon an astonished world.

Some time elapsed after I left America before I could escape from the evil influences which had nearly suffocated me there at the height of my success, but in England they took the form of a great interest in spiritualism.

I had many reasons for thinking that I possessed natural psychic powers, and I told myself that I ought to develop them. I had no fixed opinions about the possibility of communicating with the dead, but I could see no reason why this should be impossible.

I determined to investigate the matter with an open mind, and for this I do not blame myself at all. I cannot see any religious or other reason which, on the face of it, precludes honest inquiry into the mass of strange phenomena of this

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kind, and it is sheer nonsense to pretend that it can all be due to fraud. If it is true that by any harmless means we can communicate with our departed friends, it seems only natural and right to wish to do so. I imagined that this might be a new means of enlightenment, and that fearless people should investigate it honestly in the interests of humanity at large, particularly those apparently endowed with natural gifts of this kind.

I therefore joined a circle of sincere spiritualists and attended several séances with their medium, who seemed to be a very good one. I held several conversations, through her, with what appeared to be the spirits of some of my friends who had "passed over", and I was convinced that there could be nothing faked about it, in the conjurer's sense of the word. There was no trickery of an ordinary kind, and the messages must, therefore, represent either genuine communications from "the other side" or else some form of telepathy between my own subconscious mind and that of the medium, for the very voices and phrasing of my friends seemed to be reproduced by the entranced woman, although no one present could possibly have known their peculiarities but myself.

In case this should be imagination on my part, I took my secretary with me to one sitting, and asked her to make shorthand notes of all that passed. The typescript which she produced corresponded exactly with what I had heard.

Deeply impressed, and yet feeling jarred by the triviality of many of the communications, I tried to develop a gift for automatic writing, which I had found that I possessed when I was in Egypt in 1920. I then wrote many sentences in Arabic and Persian, of which languages I have no knowledge whatever, but which were deciphered by a friend of Lady Congreve's who could read the strange script. The subconscious mind theory seemed to be ruled out in this case as I have certainly never learnt the Arabic characters in this life.

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I wrote easily enough after a little practice, and was completely deceived for a time by the supposed messages from long-dead friends which I received. I never succeeded in becoming completely unconscious of what letters my hand was actually forming, as a friend of mine could be if she thought of something else hard as she wrote, but I had no idea at all what would be written, through my hand, and often the messages displeased me very much.

It was difficult to believe the official theory that I had unconsciously invented them all myself, as they often contained information of which I was not aware, and were quite unsympathetic to my ideas. The majority of them consisted of humourless, high-falutin platitudes, detailed instructions about futile things, or over-solicitous advice about my health, and there was a didactic absurdity about all of them after awhile which my sense of humour simply would not allow me to attribute to the personalities who were supposed to be writing. I could not imagine Clayton uttering such dramatic nonsense as appeared over his signature, nor "Sir Anthony Thornhirst" giving meticulous instructions about the treatment of my injured knee, all of which advice turned out to be wrong! There began to be an odd similarity between what I wrote, no matter by whom it was supposed to be signed, and the jargon of the Séance Room, as I had heard it myself, and had seen it written in records of spirit utterances. I grew certain that the whole thing was illusion and detested it all.

In the end, I became completely and finally convinced that these supposed communications from the dead, whether through mediums or planchette boards, or automatic writing, are entirely deceptive. *Whatever they are, they are not genuine messages from our friends*, although I can well understand how sincere people can be deceived into believing them to be so, as there is no ordinary human fraud about the majority of them. Sometimes the prophecies made prove strangely correct in every detail, and this seems to rule out the sub-

## *Romantic Adventure*

conscious-mind theory, as does gipsy fortune telling and clairvoyance. I have known some most striking examples of long-range, unlikely, but completely accurate forecasts made by clairvoyants, and it seems impossible to attribute these to unconscious telepathy even if such a thing exists, which is not proved, since the facts are necessarily quite unknown to the sitter. On the other hand the prophecies, both of clairvoyants and of mediums and automatic scripts, are more often wholly wrong and seriously misleading, and reliance upon them can be quite disastrous.

I have come to believe that *all* supposed communications from the dead are really made by non-human sprite-like, disembodied entities, of the type of a Will o' the Wisp, whose one object is to deceive and tease and demoralize those who believe that they can obtain spiritual guidance in this way. They are able to utilize the material of the subconscious minds of those present, and have other sources of information at their disposal as well, which they sometimes make use of to convince doubters, and so increase their power over them, with entirely evil intentions and results. This may or may not be the right explanation, but it seems to fit the facts better than the theory that the whole range of odd phenomena can spring in some miraculous way from that useful but strangely vague imaginary entity, the subconscious mind. However this may be, I prefer to insult my own mind by attributing to it, I hope unjustly, the responsibility for thinking out these stupid sentences, than to defame the memory of the dead by imagining that in any state of being they could perpetrate such atrocious rubbish!

I am positive now that all such practices are wholly evil. At best they detach the people who indulge in them from reality, influence their decisions wrongly, and play upon their fears and superstitions and hopes to the detriment of physical health and mental balance. At worst they end in utter degradation and disintegration of the whole personality, a ghastly tragedy which I have known to occur more than

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once, and which justifies all the condemnations of those who oppose spiritualism.

I cannot imagine how anyone with a good education and a sense of humour could be genuinely deceived for long by such messages as I obtained, and all that I have seen of the records of the Psychical Research Society and other books in which spirit utterances are recorded are in the same absurd, didactic, fanciful vein. I do not believe that I should have been taken in even for a short time, if I had not been already under these curious black influences before I left America.

As it was, in spite of my disgust with the whole matter, I found it quite hard to give up the habit of taking up a pencil and block, and watching idly to see what it would write. Like drink or drugs, it is quite difficult to stop this odd weakness once it has been indulged, and I am very thankful for a rush of work, which came in just as I was battling with this habit, and forced me to pull myself together, and use my pencil to earn my daily bread in this world, instead of for the doubtful purpose of recording nonsense about the next!

It is over three years now since I gave up dabbling in these evil things, and nothing would induce me to begin again. I only tell of it here in the hope of warning others who may be attracted as I was to this misleading method of spiritual investigation, and to record that I, for one, have encountered nothing but deception and harm upon the Road to Endor.

On arrival from America I found that the film industry in England was just beginning to hold up its head under the shelter of the Quota Act, after many years of neglect and starvation. The introduction of talking pictures had created yet further difficulties, as the cost of production was increased and the market considerably narrowed thereby, for comparatively few picture theatres were equipped with sound apparatus in those days, and, in addition, the valuable European and Eastern markets were largely wiped out by the language difficulty.

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I was flushed with the great success of almost all my American-made films, and was filled with a quite genuine desire to do something to help the British film industry to get on its legs, as I felt certain that with a little encouragement and better technical equipment and experience the best films in the world could be produced in England. In the meantime it seemed as if the existing British productions, with one or two exceptions, would not be hard to beat, and I was prepared to risk losing a little money if it meant giving employment to some of the poor electricians and workpeople and crowd actors who were out of work as a result of the closing down of the silent studios.

I was *not* prepared to lose £40,000, however, which is what my foolish temerity actually cost me!

I formed a little Production Company, financed entirely with my own money, and decided to produce a film in England. I engaged a Production Manager who was recommended by my Literary Agent, and who undertook to make all necessary arrangements. Next I asked my old acquaintance, and fellow-worker in Hollywood, Edward Knoblock, for his help, and he agreed to collaborate with me, and to give me his full assistance in the writing and supervision of the film, which was to be a very light comedy called *Knowing Men*, based upon a story which I had written in America for Clara Bow, and which had been seriously considered by the Paramount Studios, and only rejected because *Red Hair*, which grossed £800,000, was thought to be better.

I picked out Elissa Landi, then quite new to films, for my heroine; Carl Brisson was the half-French hero, and Helen Haye and Jeanne de Casalis played other leading parts extremely well. The subsequent career of all these artists, especially Elissa, has, I think, justified my choice. Charlie Rosher, for eleven years Mary Pickford's camera-man, undertook the photographic and lighting supervision, and United Artists guaranteed a release and a substantial advance payment on delivery of the negative. It all seemed quite

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reasonably businesslike. We rented space at the British International Studios at Elstree, and the production went smoothly enough. The actors and technical staff were friendly and efficient, and Mr. Joe Grossman, the Elstree Studio Manager, a very amusing character, was most helpful. To everyone's amazement, we finished the picture only two days over the scheduled time, and although not up to the standard of my American films, it did not seem to be too bad for a first attempt at a talking picture, made all on my own, in England. I thought that the critics would be kind to anyone spending their own money on the production of British films, and would make allowances for some imperfections.

However, I was wrong ; the storm of criticism ran to centre-page headlines, and the most extraordinary allegations of immorality were made against the poor little comedy. I have never understood why, as it was certainly not that. To complete the disaster, through some misunderstanding on the part of Mr. Knoblock's lawyer, he injunctioned the showing of the picture on the first night of its West End run at the Regal Cinema and it had to be taken off. He lost the case, but it was too late to overtake the harm which had been done. Except for the guaranteed advance, the film was a dead loss to my little company.

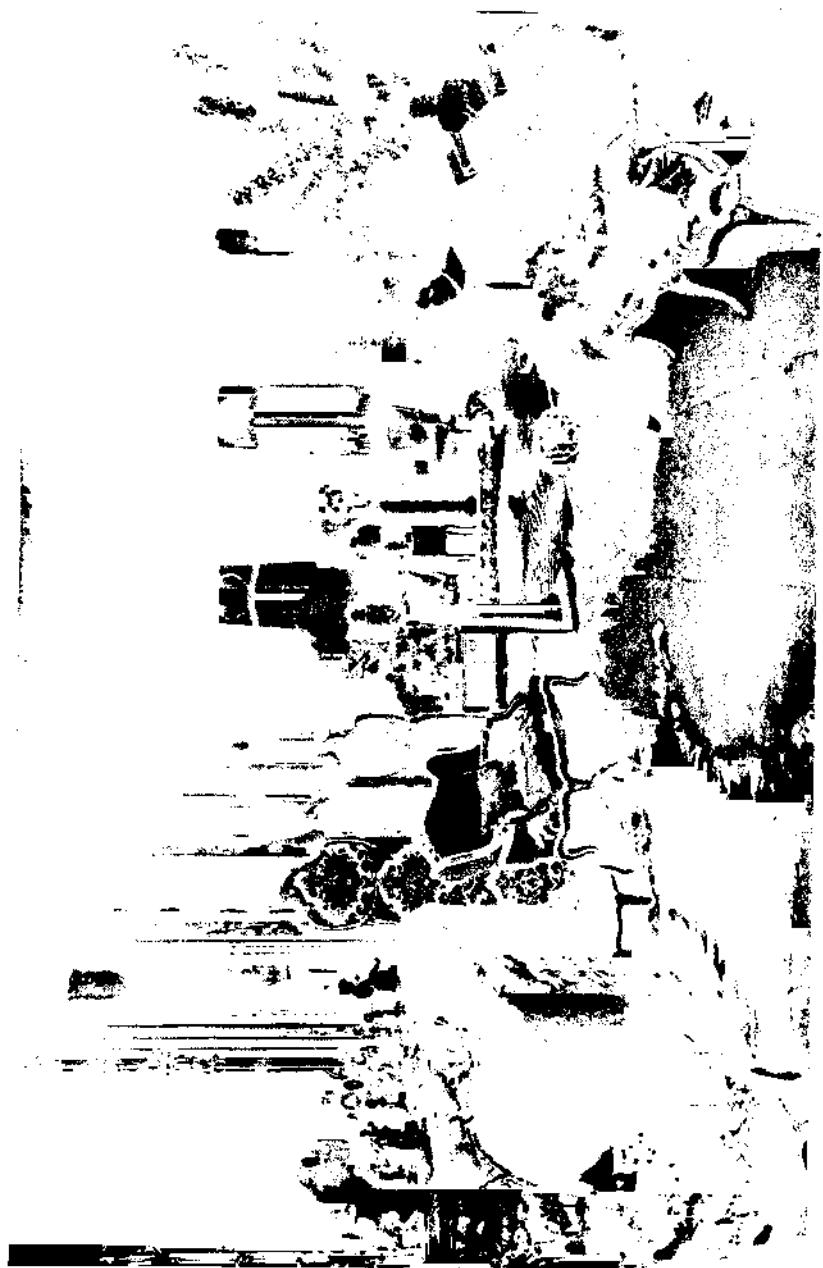
Mr. Schenck, the head of United Artists, however, who was over in London then, seemed to think the picture not too bad, for he wanted me to make a series of others to be distributed by his company, and which he hoped would get an American release and so retrieve my losses. Of course it was insane of me to listen to him, but I did—perhaps because I have always disliked giving in to criticism ! I chose a more dramatic story next time, and hoped for better luck at the hands of the critics. But the result was just the same, and with a heavy bank overdraft to face in place of the bulging pockets which I had brought from America, I retired to lick my wounds and meditate upon life.

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I settled down to write novels once more, in order to pay off my overdraft (a feat which, thank goodness, I have now achieved !), but found the same barrage of hostile criticism pursuing me in my literary efforts as in my film enterprises.

I was really taken aback by this, having enjoyed the protection of organized publicity campaigns conducted by experts while I was employed on a salary basis by the big film studios and powerful literary syndicates of America, and having therefore come to possess a quite exaggerated idea of my own literary worth, no doubt !

Yet there is one feature of the whole tangle of my troubles which has secretly pleased me. No one has ever showed me the slightest *mercy*. I still command enough respect from my critics, it appears, for them to hit me at all times as hard as they can. It never seems to occur to any of them to grant me quarter for a space, or to refrain from showering their blows upon my lonely, feminine, and no longer youthful head, as it would if I had appeared to them feeble and failing ; for the British Press is nothing if not chivalrous to those who are old, ill, and down on their luck. I was all three of these things for a time after the failure of my English films, owing to a fall which injured my knee and tied me to my sofa for nearly a year ; but apparently no one suspected it, for which I am sincerely grateful. Now I am well, young in spirit, have paid off my debts, and hope soon to start on a trip to Turkey, as I have received a delightful invitation to visit and write about that most interesting country ; so there is not the slightest reason for anyone to hold his hand, and I trust that no one will insult me by doing so ! I shall feel truly humiliated if the publication of these memoirs fails to arouse the storm of hostile criticism to which I have become accustomed, and which is the truest flattery of all to those who hope, as I do, to call forth their opponents' sharpest arrows until the very end, and to go down, when the time comes, with colours flying.



Mrs. Glynn, 1936



### *More about Films*

But as I hope this photograph shows, that time is not yet, and ten years' hence I may perhaps have collected sufficient records of new and exciting adventures to fill a second volume of these memoirs—who can tell? Perhaps after all I will go to China before Turkey, as the news from Pekin sounds rather interesting.

Yes, I think it must be Pekin next!

CHAPTER XXX

*A Vision of Things to Come*

DURING the last three years of comparative quiet I think that I have learnt more about the meaning of things than I did from all the busy travels and adventures of the previous thirty years. I have sat on my blue sofa in my lovely blue and gold room overlooking Hyde Park, or in the garden of the little cottage at Taplow which I rented last summer, and have *thought* for hours on end, reviewing the odd pageant of my life, and trying to draw the meaning from all these varied experiences. I have read many interesting books, too, seen plays, and talked to friends, and I feel as if I have obtained much enlightenment and gained a serenity which I have never known before.

The philosophy which I have reached at the end of the road, seems, quaintly enough, to be almost the opposite of the cynical, old-fashioned outlook with which I set out in life, for although I still shed a few tears now and then over the passing of some things which were good and beautiful in the *ancien régime*, I am able to discern the signs of a far more glorious future, so close upon us that I may even live to see it dawn. In short, I am that real oddity, an old woman who still looks forward rather than back, and whose joyful optimism is due not to anticipation of the traditional glories of another world, but to the recognition of the tangible earthly happiness which seems to be descending in a positive shower upon this generation, and which will, I am convinced, soon transform all that remains ugly in the life of the present day,

## *A Vision of Things to Come*

if only we have the sense to grasp our good fortune, and to adjust our ideas to a new age.

It is only during the last few months that I have come to see the future through such rosy spectacles, for before that I had not solved a problem which had worried me unconsciously, I now realize, for very many years.

At rare intervals throughout my life, starting with my drive through Seven Dials when I was only eight years old, I have been reluctantly forced to notice and take into account some form or other of the ugly, pitiful realities of human poverty and suffering, and I have been deeply shocked. In my heart I have always known that some day, somehow, and everywhere these sons and daughters of Martha must and would be permitted by an Almighty Providence to lay down their terrible burden; not merely at the end of their lives, released by the merciful hand of Death, but here and now, on God's good Earth. I have known and recognized that this was just and right and inevitable, and not to be resisted by Principalities and Powers, by Gods or men; I thought of the process in terms of the progress of Democracy.

But instead of considering this certainty in the light of a joyful hope, a Vision Splendid, a millennium to be awaited with eager desire, it represented in my mind I regret to say only a gloomy, dreaded shadow, like a thundercloud advancing towards the sun and threatening to blot out its blessed, life-giving rays.

This was because I shared with my contemporaries (the best brains amongst them not excluded!) the curiously limited economic notions of the day, and was convinced that the poor could only become rich if the rich became poor! I believed that, as there was only so much money to go round, if the poor were given more the rich must necessarily have less, and therefore it appeared that the end of poverty must inevitably coincide with the end of riches. The Socialist slogans about the "redistribution of wealth" and their threats of punitive taxation (actually imposed in the end by

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successive *Conservative* Governments !) helped to increase the odd, but I believe general, belief that wealth is a strictly limited thing which can be taken from one section of the community and given to another, but which cannot belong to both.

So completely was the idea of riches linked to the idea of Gold in the days before the War, when piles of golden sovereigns represented to the average man the only tangible evidences of his success in life, that it seems to have occurred only to poets, and never to financiers or economists, that real wealth has nothing to do with gold and can certainly not be increased materially by digging this one of many precious metals out of the ground in South Africa or the Klondike, and transferring it, after an expensive process of refinement, to the underground vaults of the various National Banks !

In this atmosphere of sanctimonious parsimony—this mental and spiritual straitjacket, it was carefully calculated, I believe, by some sincere but humourless theorist, that if a purely Socialistic regime could be established, and wealth redistributed evenly amongst the whole of the people of this country, there would be sufficient income to provide each family of four or five people with an income of three or four hundred pounds a year ; and although this was thought to be rather an optimistic estimate by some, it was hailed as a glorious ideal, and dangled with success before the electors as the nearest approach to the millennium possible of achievement on this ill-designed earth.

Although I naturally agreed that the poor ought to have a larger share of the good things of life, and that extreme poverty and misery should be relieved (out of the pockets of up-starts and *nouveaux riches* if possible, but never out of more aristocratic purses !) I was too deeply imbued with the spirit of the Renaissance to believe it wholly desirable to put an end to the spiritual, mental, and physical joys which only riches and leisure can produce and which a perfectly even

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distribution of existing wealth would blast like a frost in May.

I have none of the Puritan in my make up (perhaps this is too well known to need stating !) and from my childhood onwards I have always loved such things as fine buildings, splendid rooms, rich silks and blazing jewels, adorning handsome, soigné men and lovely, carefree women. I have gloried in stately pageantry and show, and have accepted gladly the individual discipline demanded by the maintenance of outward dignity and form, although upholding equally the need for joyous earthly love and its fulfilment.

Beautiful pictures and works of art ; music well played ; good food and perfect wine ; wit, graceful manners, cultivated minds ; leisure and solitude, and all that springs from opportunity to read and think in quietness alone ; the merry heart of the sportsman, the balanced mind of the traveller, the soaring visions of the poet ; last but not least, the honour of a gentleman, and the pride and dignity of such a lady as my grandmother—all these things and more seemed to me to be so utterly desirable and necessary to the world, that if, as appeared inevitable, the attainment of the insipid £400-a-year Socialist Heaven-on-Earth involved the total abandonment and destruction of these good things, then I knew that I would prefer to share the fate of the other red-headed ladies in the early Italian pictures of the Day of Judgment, and go tumbling downwards into Hell—in excellent company ! There, at least, I felt that there might still be dancing and feasting and beauty and grandeur and joy, since all these pagan delights would have been banished from the earth, and assuredly not transferred to Heaven !

The shadow of this awful choice which seemed to exist between the continued enslavement and misery of the poor and the total destruction of all which makes life beautiful and gracious, has hung over me for many years ; and not only over me, but over the whole civilized world. In fact, it has not yet passed away, although the basis of the terrible, cramp-

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ing economic theory out of which it was born has long since been shattered by Henry Ford. As if bewitched by a curse, the world has remained blind to the true implications of the stupendous achievement of the mass-production factories, which is nothing less than the release of mankind from its age-old bondage.

There need be no delay in the process of deliverance, for the means to achieve it are already here, in the machine-shops of the factories, the test-tubes of the laboratories, and the microscopes of the plant-breeding stations. The spread of mechanization which is proceeding so rapidly to-day is plainly the work of a Redeeming Angel, labouring mightily to end the curse of human slavery. He seeks to give to all men that fullness of life, that freedom of thought and action, that fearlessness of outlook, which in classical times was achieved only by those who rested upon the backs of many slaves ; and more, to add to these good gifts many additional ones of which our fathers did not even dream. Through the introduction of machinery and of modern methods of production it will soon be possible for everyone to possess all those material benefits which were limited to the rich not long ago, and what is more, leisure and health to enjoy them to the full. Through the agencies of universal education, the press, the films, the wireless, television and who knows what additional wonders of a modern world, I am convinced that all mankind will soon possess the necessary cultivation of mind to appreciate the treasures of art, music and literature, and will become well-informed and intelligent citizens of the world, with new vistas of knowledge, interest and beauty opening before them on every side. The great development of aviation which is now upon us will soon enable the people of all countries to visit each other, and so develop the spirit of mutual understanding which will eventually bring about the universal reign of peace which the more enlightened peoples already desire so sincerely.

If anyone doubts the possibility of achieving these results,

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let him look back upon the days of his youth, and compare the standard of material and mental well-being of the poor, and even of the middle classes before the War, with that which exists to-day. Let him look at the gaiety and smart appearance of the girls emerging from the shops at closing time, the cheerful parties of well-dressed, happy-looking young people in the myriad places of entertainment, the opportunities for sport and pleasure which exist on every side. Let him gaze at the vast range of luxuries offered at bargain prices in each shop window, or stroll through Woolworth's and ask himself how much these sixpenny articles would have cost in 1910, supposing, which is unlikely, that they were obtainable at all. Then let him conjure up if he can, a picture of the want, the squalor, the misery of the poor at the beginning of the century ; the ragged, rickety children covered in sores, the draggled, overworked shopgirls, the drunken workmen lurching home on Saturday nights, the prostitutes at every street corner, and the terrible expression of pain and hopelessness which was to be found on nine out of ten of the faces of those over thirty years old, in any crowd.

When we recognize the enormous strides forward which have been made in this first third of the twentieth century, it becomes obvious that this time in which we are privileged to live has already proved itself to be in very fact the era of miracles which we used to declare had long since fled.

Nothing is impossible to-day, and I firmly believe that all the present advantages of wealth will soon be made available to every Englishman if not to the whole world ; the poor will become rich without taking away anything from those who now possess wealth, and the age-old struggle between the haves and the have-nots will be forgotten at last.

I am profoundly grateful that my eyes have been opened sufficiently for me to see that the terrible dilemma caused by the idea of limited wealth is non-existent and that the bounds of the material and mental and spiritual well-being of all mankind are set only by our own imagination.

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But fast as we are moving in the direction of these glorious improvements, there seems to be a great deal of speeding up still to do. The work of the Angel of Plenty is being delayed, if not stultified, at the present time by the persistence of the wicked old ideas that the wealth of a nation is related to the amount of gold in the coffers of its National Bank, instead of to the number, brains and capacity of its citizens and the fertility and mineral deposits of its soil. The new Slaves of the Lamp, those God-given machines which have been sent to earth to put an end to human poverty and pain, are not allowed to multiply their gifts as quickly as they could, and many of those they do produce is still held back from those who need them most and piled behind the gate of our out-dated economic prejudices, while our hungry unemployed stare dumbly at them through the bars.

The misery which can be caused by unwise or ill-intentioned manipulation of monetary systems, whether by real, deliberate, and as I think, villainous inflation as in Germany in 1923, or by totally unwarranted deflation, as in the return to the Gold Standard made in 1925, and many of the other world slumps which have arisen at regular intervals for many years, is obviously unnecessary.

If so much dislocation of trade, and suffering due to monetary disturbances, can be produced by the decisions of the Directors of the Reichsbank or the Bank of England, it seems clear that wealth and poverty, in so far as these depend upon currency, are definitely under the control of man and could be manipulated wisely as well as ill. The world was not in fact any less potentially rich during the slump than she was before it began, or than she is now. The whole wretched business was psychological. We are at all times as rich as we think we are, and as poor as we are told to be. There is nothing on earth to keep us bound upon the wheel of poverty, that dreadful cycle of booms and slumps and depressions which we have endured for so long, except our own wills, roped as they are to the Midas-like belief that

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gold and silver constitute real wealth, and open to the suggestion that we are poverty-stricken if we are told so often enough.

In recent times these simple facts, which seem so obvious to an old woman like me, appear to have dawned even upon some of the economists, although they are not yet accepted by the majority. Gold seems to have been partially dethroned, and is no longer held to represent the only real wealth, as would once have been thought quite natural, but is rather described as an "anchor", to which we must at all costs remain attached if we would avoid the terrors of the vasty deep!

An anchor is a poor symbol for those in search of a new and better world, and its appeal is chiefly to those who are still obsessed with the delusion that the wealth of the world is strictly limited, and that you cannot have your cake and eat it, surely the most misleading of all copybook maxims.

The truth seems to me to be that the whole machinery of our present economic system is worked to-day, as it has always been, by human beings, and it is pure nonsense to imagine that there is anything "automatic" about it. Translated into the language of mythology we might say that, fearing the reputed fits of madness of the God Demos, to whom we have entrusted the control of all other matters affecting our daily life, we have invoked the aid of the High Priests of the ancient God Bel and have requested them to act as guardians of our treasure chest, taking care to see that it is kept filled or emptied entirely in accordance with the whim of the god and regardless of our real wealth. Blind justice, beneficent, steadfast vision and stainless virtue are attributed to Bel (known in these prosaic times by the title of "the Gold Standard"), but it is my own belief that he has long since ceased to exist except in our imaginations, and that his golden robes are worn to-day by an erratic sprite called Confidence, whose dances and quips are so outrageous that she has succeeded in bewitching the poor High Priests of Bel, who

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have failed to notice that their Deity is no longer to be found, and that the treasure chest of the world is kept unfilled only on account of the pranks of this naughty and ungovernable elf!

The moral of this little allegory is that if mankind would only recognize that material as well as spiritual wealth springs from the qualities and capacities of the human mind and heart and soul, and is quite independent of physical and material appearances and limitations, this world would very quickly become a richer and a happier place.

No doubt it is quite absurd of me to imagine that my views about real wealth and its relation to money can be of interest to anybody. But when one who has been blind for many years suddenly sees, or think she sees, a great new light, it is too much to expect that she will not behave like Chanticleer and shout her feelings from the house-tops—or such other point of vantage as her publisher is good enough to allow her!

And so the search for romance upon which I started out so many years ago has ended, unexpectedly, in the most romantic of all discoveries—that the Millennium of my dreams is coming true! That all the beautiful and gracious things which I have loved and sought, instead of disappearing from the earth as I had feared, will soon be added to and multiplied a thousand-fold.

Like Columbus, who set out to seek no more than a new path to an old continent, and found instead a glorious new one, so I have sought to find Victorian romance, and after many years of search have made instead a far more wonderful discovery—no less than this—

“God’s in His Heaven—all’s right with the World!”

FINIS

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